



THE WAR'S IMPACT ON VULNERABLE WORKERS IN ISRAEL

Kav LaOved is an independent organization dedicated to assisting individual vulnerable workers, analyzing Israeli labor policies that perpetuate inequality, and conducting legal and advocacy work to bring about positive change. Over the years we have gathered extensive data and insight, which we regularly share with decision makers, international bodies, and the media.

Since the start of the October 2023 war our work has garnered considerable attention from the [international media](#). This interest arose from our daily engagement with vulnerable, voiceless, and invisible workers including over 100,000 migrant workers from developing countries, a similar number of West Bank and Gaza Palestinian workers, 30,000 asylum seekers, and innumerable disadvantaged Israeli workers. All these populations were deeply impacted by the ongoing war, with some experiencing severe consequences.

Vulnerable Israeli Workers: Since 7 October we have been inundated with calls from workers seeking assistance following evacuations from their homes, sudden job terminations, abrupt closure of schools and kindergartens, significant income losses, and a lack of clarity regarding entitlement to compensation during war. The ensuing confusion intensified tensions in the labor sector, with both employers and workers anxiously awaiting government decisions regarding eligibility for compensation amidst the widespread employment upheaval. To alleviate uncertainty, we generated and disseminated updates and informational [leaflets](#) in six languages providing up to date information to workers lost in chaos, clarifying unpaid leave mechanisms, eligibility criteria for unemployment benefits, the expansion of the social safety net for workers affected by the war, and other issues.

Furthermore, a disturbing phenomenon surfaced wherein employers in Israel engaged in illegal acts of racism by unjustly threatening or firing Arab Israeli workers. We responded by assisting workers who were unfairly dismissed due to baseless allegations stemming from their social media activity. Through our efforts, we successfully reinstated many workers back to their positions, combating discrimination and upholding their rights.

West Bank and Gazan Workers: Our Palestinian Workers' Department has maintained close contact with Palestinian workers whose employment abruptly ceased on 7 October. This unfolding catastrophe has left more than one hundred thousand workers, as well as their families, in very precarious situation, as Palestinian workers have been barred from re-entering Israel for an unknown duration. Moreover, there is a looming uncertainty regarding their prospects for employment even after the cessation of hostilities.

Due to the abrupt outbreak of the war, numerous Palestinian workers were not paid their September salaries. We provided them with individual assistance and raised awareness about the violation of their rights amid the chaotic circumstances. We also actively engaged decision-makers, urging them to facilitate the return of workers and end their collective punishment. Our advocacy efforts extended to parliamentary committees where we presented compelling arguments and formulated proposals for immediate financial assistance, leveraging the workers' Pension Fund.

We also maintained direct communication with workers from Gaza amidst the tumultuous events. Many of them sought refuge in the West Bank after the collective revocation of their work permits on 7 October. Tragically, many endured unjust imprisonments in Israel including cases of torture while in detention, and even fatalities. Ultimately, this group of workers was deported back to Gaza, where they found themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of violence, devastation, and deprivation.

Migrant Workers: our Migrant Workers Department, encompassing the Agriculture and Caregiving sectors, has been deeply involved in responding to tragic situations of workers who were murdered on 7 October, kidnapped, or forced to flee from the conflict zone. We mobilized efforts to coordinate evacuations and disseminated vital information to disoriented workers. Migrant workers, particularly those affected by the events of 7 October, often lack familiarity with the military situation in Israel, have limited access to reliable information in their languages, and may lack support networks to assist them during times of crisis.

Our team provided round-the-clock support to affected workers for several weeks. We facilitated the safe evacuation of hundreds of workers from conflict areas, arranged temporary shelter, and facilitated the return to their home countries for workers who chose to leave. These emergency humanitarian efforts were driven by compassion and concern for the well-being of workers and marked a departure from our normal day-to-day activities. Despite the challenges requiring resourcefulness and improvisation, our response ensured that many workers were able to conclude their employment safely and fairly. Our hearts were warmed by the many expressions of gratitude from migrant workers and their families for the care and support we provided during such terrifying times.

Asylum Seekers: Asylum seekers in Israel were not spared the trauma of this war. KLO's Refugees and Asylum Seekers Department assists tens of thousands of refugees from Sudan, Eritrea and other countries, whom Israel has been actively seeking to remove since their arrival into the country. Navigating through a maze of laws, regulations, and disheartening decisions regarding refugee employment in Israel, our staff has been over the years tirelessly advocating for the rights of these vulnerable individuals, achieving significant milestones in their protection. Regrettably, we cannot alter the hostile atmosphere fostered by various governments' ministers, which exacerbates the challenges faced by asylum seekers. Consequently, much of the department's work centers on providing practical solutions for refugees who have been mistreated by their employers. These injustices span from wage theft and unjust dismissal during pregnancy to pervasive exploitation, which has left many refugees in dire circumstances. Despite facing adversity, our commitment to advocating for justice and dignity for all asylum seekers in Israel remains unwavering.

Amidst the chaos of war, we stepped in to assist dozens of refugees' families in evacuating from their homes in areas under missile attacks, ensuring their safety when few others were concerned for their well-being. Due to the systemic discrimination they face in Israel and the daily erosion of their dignity, most refugees choose to leave Israel as soon as they get an acceptable alternative. We bear witness to this ongoing cycle of humiliation which underscores the urgent need for systemic change and greater protection of refugees' rights.

The challenges ahead of us are enormous. A humanitarian crisis is unfolding in the West Bank as more than one hundred thousand Palestinian workers and their families have been unemployed and without any safety net for months. In parallel, Israel is bringing tens of thousands new migrant workers to Israel without any supervision, with many workers having to pay illegal brokers thousands of dollars to obtain their work visa, leaving them debt ridden and easy prey for abusive employers. Meanwhile vulnerable Israeli workers continue suffering from the downfalls of the conflict without any meaningful support from the government.

KLO serves as a comprehensive source of information and can offer a wealth of insights regarding vulnerable workers in Israel. Through our extensive database which includes case studies, authored reports, critical assessments of the Israeli labor market, and testimonies from workers sent to shelters due to exploitative employment conditions akin to human trafficking, we can offer detailed and nuanced perspectives. We remain available to assist journalists in better understanding Israel's complex reality these days as well as its extremely problematic treatment of vulnerable workers.