



SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEE COMMUNITY IN ISRAEL



March 21, 2012

Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Dear Israeli Government Officers from MoI and the MoFA:

The South Sudanese community is writing to the government of Israel in response to the Ministry of Interior decision to deport South Sudanese by April 1, 2012.

We understand that the Israeli government has promised the UNHCR in Tel Aviv that the South Sudanese can undergo individual asylum checks. We do not trust the Israeli Ministry of Interior, or the Israeli government in general, to carry out these checks.

First, we know from our experience in Israel that basically no one has refugee status. With over 50,000 asylum seekers in Israel and under 30 recognized refugees since 2005, how are we supposed to trust this system? The whole system is aimed **to reject us and humiliate us.**

Second, we have the experience of the last month with the Ministry of Interior which teaches us that we cannot trust the Ministry of Interior. South Sudanese, and many Sudanese not even from South Sudan, are refused visas when they go to renew their documents. People are given all different kinds of paper and appointment slips. Some are not given any papers at all. The Ministry of Interior offices are full of chaos and it is unclear who is in charge. How are we supposed to trust this system **with our lives?**

In addition, we are also writing to express **our concern** about the **two planes expected to fly next week to South Sudan.** Did these individuals really “choose” to “voluntarily” return to South Sudan? Does a person who cannot renew their visa and who was then fired from their job, all following the Israeli government decision, really making a voluntary choice? If this person truly had access to a fair refugee system in Israel, would they make the ‘choice’ to ‘voluntarily’ leave Israel for South Sudan? The UNHCR and other international organizations need to be involved in sending individuals to South Sudan. We know that the UNHCR and other international organizations are not involved in the “voluntary” returns and we believe this is against international standards.

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At many meetings and conversations, the Israeli government has asked us when we will be ready to leave. Here is the answer.

We are ready to leave to South Sudan when:

- 1) The situation in South Sudan becomes safe and stable
- 2) South Sudan has a diplomatic presence in Israel and we can apply with dignity for South Sudanese citizenship
- 3) Israel has a fair refugee law in place and has a history of fair refugee procedures. Individuals still wanting to apply for refugee status on an individual basis even after a change in the situation in South Sudan should be able to do so, in a fair way that meets international standards.

Until the three conditions above are met, we are calling on the Israeli government to **reverse their decision by not carrying out these deportations and by extending our group protection.**

It is important for us to remind you that the current situation in South Sudan is unsafe and therefore we cannot return. According to UN agency reports including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), South Sudan is currently suffering from:

1. *Insecurity because of north Sudan:* Sudan continues to bomb South Sudan and fight over resources and borders. Abyei has been destroyed and hundreds of thousands of refugees from South Kordofan and Blue Nile have run into South Sudan and are living in refugee camps. Do not send us to be killed by the government of Sudan who has already taken the lives of so many of our brothers and sisters.
2. *Inter-Communal Fighting:* Within South Sudan, many of the tribes are fighting over basic resources. In Jonglei and other states in Sudan, hundreds have been killed and the South Sudanese government and UNMISS remains helpless in controlling the violence. Do not send us to where we may be unsafe.

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3. *Humanitarian Crisis:* Much of the population is now dependent on humanitarian organizations like the UN for food. There is no water fit for drinking and no medical treatment for the sick and injured. Do not send us to die of hunger.

In addition, many South Sudanese continue to be recognized as refugees in other countries of the world. Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda are receiving new South Sudanese refugees everyday and are even having to build bigger refugee camps. Do not send us so we can become refugees again.

South Sudanese have been recognized and accepted as refugees around the world in the United States, Canada, Australia and in European countries.

We ask that all future correspondence pays attention to the points mentioned in this letter and that this letter goes formally on the record.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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