SURVIVING IN LIMBO
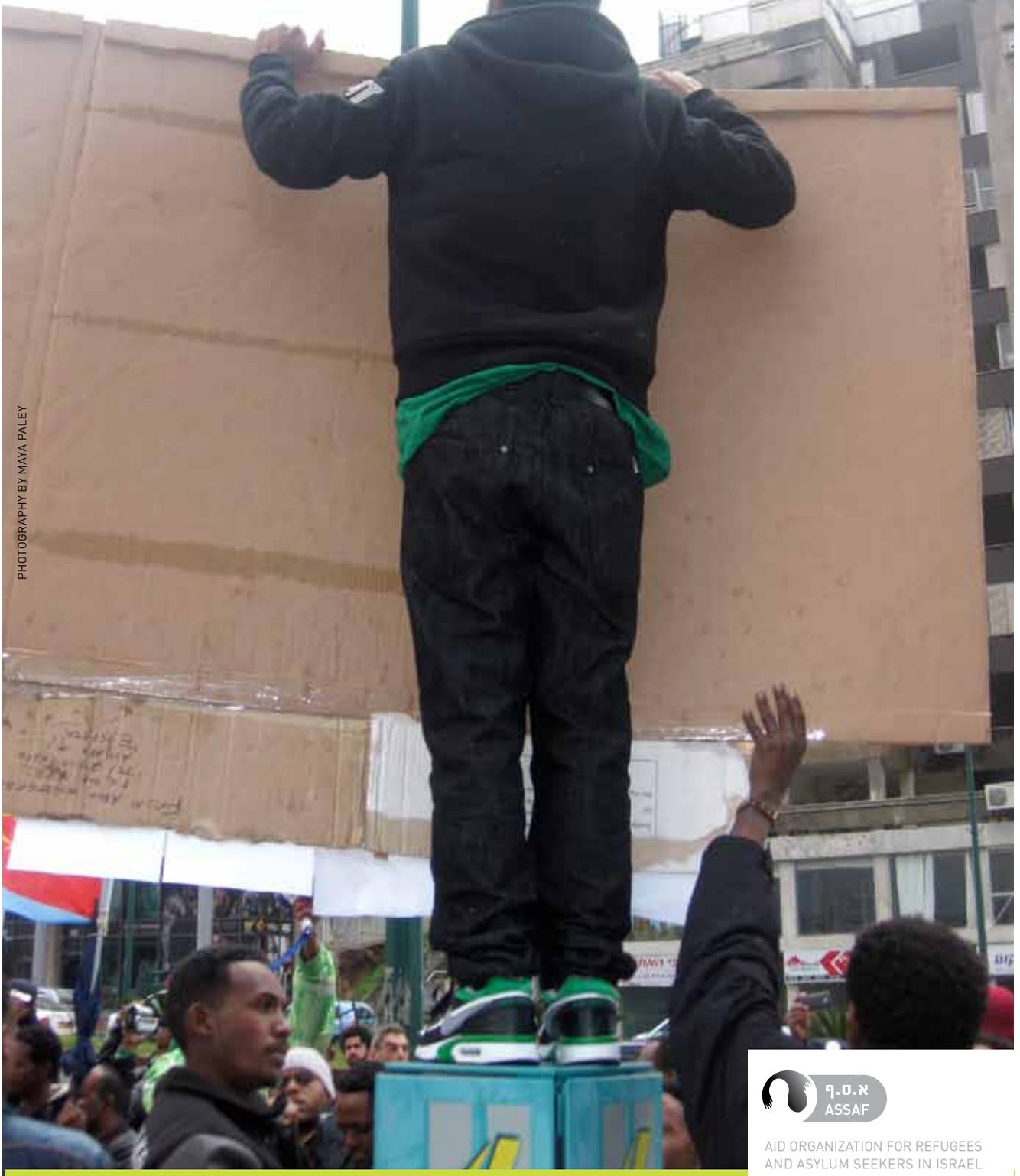## COMMUNITY FORMATION AMONG SUDANESE AND ERITREAN ASYLUM SEEKERS IN ISRAEL

BY MAYA PALEY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAYA PALEY

SURVIVING IN LIMBO

COMMUNITY FORMATION AMONG SUDANESE AND ERITREAN ASYLUM SEEKERS IN ISRAEL

BY MAYA PALEY

CONTENTS

I'd like to dedicate this report to my grandfather, Saba Lester Paley, a man who believed in me unconditionally, and whose model of ethics and integrity are something one can only aspire to. Thank you, Saba, for teaching me to fight for what is right.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2005, an estimated 35,000 asylum seekers from African countries have entered Israel's borders. The Israeli government estimates that almost 60% are from Eritrea and over 25% come from Sudan. The government has issued temporary three-month visas to over 26,000 of the asylum seekers, work permits to 2,000 Eritreans, and temporary residence permits to almost 500 Darfuris.

Israel's Human Dignity and Liberty Basic Law exists for the sole purpose of ensuring that "all persons are entitled to protection of their life, body, and dignity."[1] The Law maintains that the "fundamental human rights in Israel are founded upon recognition of the value of the human being, the sanctity of human life, and the principle that all persons are free."[2] Nevertheless, the refugee status determination (RSD) procedure in Israel remains largely inaccessible and acquiring refugee status is almost impossible for most non-Jewish asylum seekers who make their way to Israel. And, in November 2010, in an effort to contain and deter asylum seekers from entering Israel, the Knesset approved of a plan to build a detention facility to house 8,000-10,000 asylum seekers in an isolated area of the Negev desert. As the State's policies toward the asylum seekers harshen in order to deter asylum seekers from coming and to encourage those who are in Israel to leave, social, economic, and psychological harm to the asylum seekers who already live in Israel is increasingly apparent. These policies have resulted in the exclusion of asylum seekers from accessing social services.

One positive result has been the establishment of Israeli Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and refugee and asylum seeker formal community organizations and groups.[a] Formal community groups aim to fill some of the gaps created by the Israeli government that either cannot or are not being filled by the CSOs for various reasons. The Sudanese and Eritrean populations have established both traditional and non-traditional organizations whose goals are to provide humanitarian aid, to advocate for political change, to provide a space for religious expression and community, or to resolve community and individual level conflicts. This report aims to illustrate the breadth and diversity of Eritrean and Sudanese communal institutions in Israel, as well as to provide a framework for how CSOs, government agencies, and community groups and organizations[1] can effectively work together to achieve common goals.

This report begins by mapping the existing community organizations and groups in Tel Aviv, Arad, Eilat, and Ashdod. The report also focuses on conflict resolution mechanisms with an account of the traditional and adapted mechanisms of the Eritrean and Sudanese communities. Both populations have traditional mechanisms for resolving conflicts such as calling upon close relatives or friends to resolve domestic or financial disputes. There are also respected community 'elders' who have the tools and capacity to resolve larger issues within their communities. Communities have also adapted to their lives in Israel by selecting leaders who are charged specifically to resolve these novel problems or to engage in dialogue with the Israeli public, the CSOs, and Israeli government agencies.

The community organizations face many impediments to accomplishing their goals in Israel. For the Sudanese populations, such challenges include, among others, financial sustainability, disputes over leadership, and daily survival constraints. Also, certain groups are systematically excluded from community leadership roles. Some of the challenges among the Eritrean population are similar to those of the Sudanese communities like coping with the daily challenges to survive in limbo, but there are also challenges more specific to the Eritrean community groups including the lack of trust, collective hopelessness, and fear of the Eritrean government.

The growing gap between the needs of community organizations and what CSOs can provide must be addressed. It stems largely from the fact that CSOs favor working with certain community groups and leaders, which means that CSOs focus on addressing the needs and concerns of the most empowered or vocal groups within these communities while entirely neglecting those with less access to them. In effect, the neglected groups are rendered voiceless since community organizations depend on CSOs to provide them with organizational assistance and channels to reach the government agencies and the Israeli public. The result is a skewed approach to advocacy based on a perpetual dependence model from which community groups are unable to break free.

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[a] 'Groups' refers to all the formal community organizations and groups, but it also refers to those that are not registered as non-governmental organizations, while 'organizations' refers to groups that are registered as non-governmental organizations in Israel.

This report aims to reflect and provide a voice for the asylum seekers in Israel. We hope this report will provide Civil Society Organizations, government agencies, and asylum seeker community organizations with useful information and recommendations that will enable them all to work together to achieve the following goals: to decrease asylum seeker dependency on CSOs, to increase their capacity to self-advocate for community and individual needs, to increase their capacity to overcome challenges through self-help and conflict resolution mechanisms, and to strengthen community identities. We hope that this will result in the increased resilience of communities over time, and an improved quality of life and wellbeing for individuals who are asylum seekers in Israel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CSOS It is imperative that CSOs consider adopting a different approach, one that regards community work as something to be accomplished with advice from, and through increased dialogue with, a more diverse array of asylum seeker community members. CSOs should make a concerted effort to become familiar with and sensitive to the diversity of collective representations and to refrain from favoring certain groups or leaders over others. CSOs have an opportunity to partner with community leaders who have the potential to positively influence many of their community members, but these partnerships will not occur without making real efforts to step into the field.

ASYLUM SEEKER COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS Community leaders should make efforts to express their needs and challenges directly to the CSOs so that the CSOs can work with them to create more effective programs that meet their needs and to provide them with increased support for their programs if so desired. Community groups and organizations are encouraged to make solid efforts to introduce their leaders, including elders and women, to the CSOs and relevant government agencies. It is also recommended that community groups and organizations make direct contacts with Israeli government agencies, rather than relying on CSOs to do so. Lastly, community leaders are encouraged to increase transparency of their leadership to their own community members in order to mitigate trust issues and to increase leadership effectiveness.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES It is imperative that government agencies strive to create a clear, consistent, transparent, and more humane policy toward the asylum seekers in Israel—one that ensures that a fair refugee status determination procedure is in place, that does not criminalize or arbitrarily detain innocent people, and that ensures people are treated as human beings. Government agencies are encouraged to establish direct contacts with community leaders in each city and from each population existent throughout Israel by establishing positions for community liaisons to the various communities. Each city where asylum seekers reside has its own policies that must be addressed, such as the segregated school system in Eilat, and engaging with both the CSOs and the local community leaders on such policies is essential.

INTRODUCTION
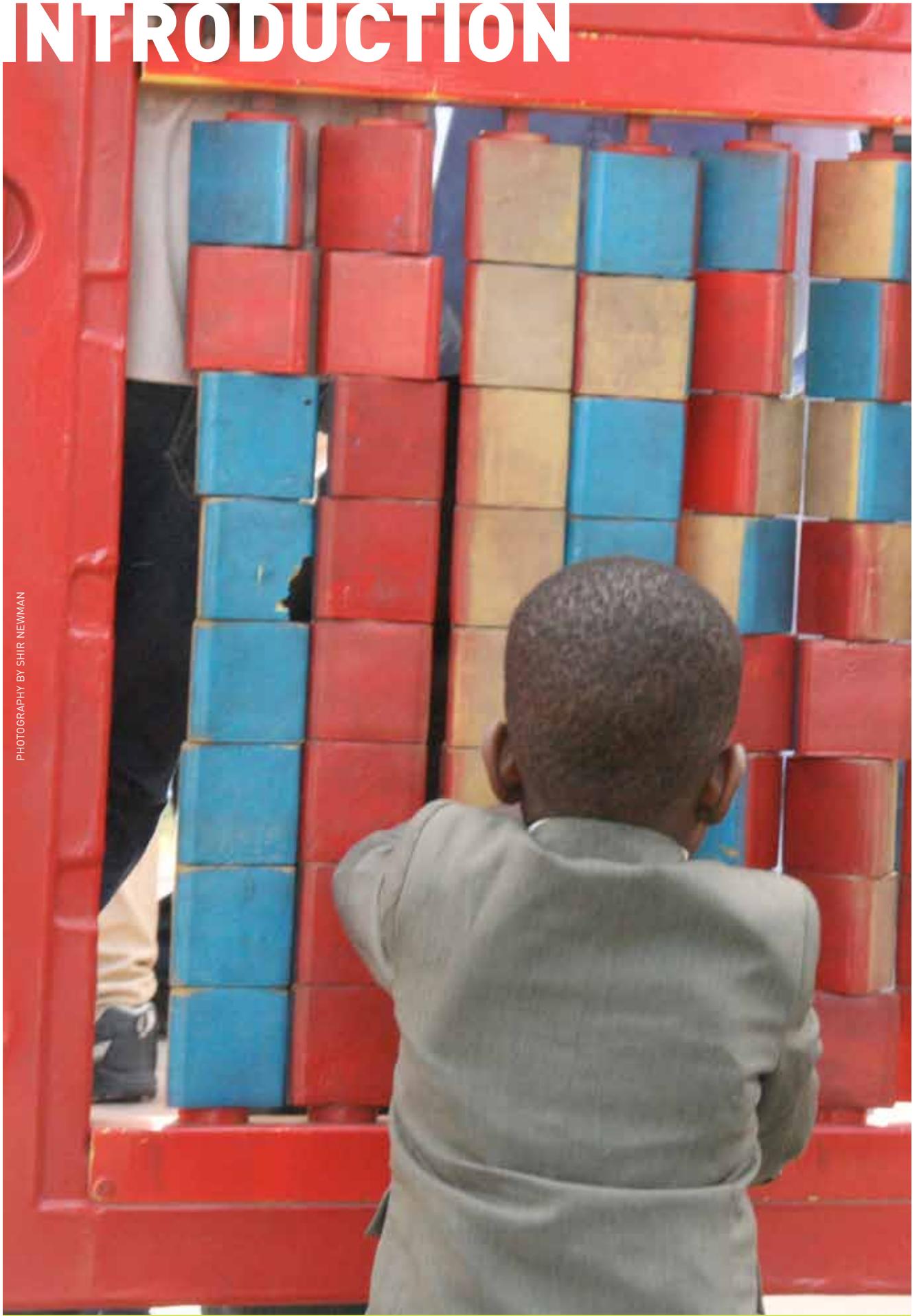
BACKGROUND

At the time of writing (May 2011), an estimated 35,000 asylum seekers from African countries are residing within Israel's borders. This figure relies on a report published by the Israeli Knesset in January 2011, which quantifies the "Numbers of infiltrators[b] and asylum seekers in recent years":[3]

YEAR OF ENTRY	TO END 2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	TOTAL
NUMBER OF INFILTRATORS	1,070	5,005	8,698	4,827	13,686	153	33,439

People from Sudan and Eritrea began arriving to Israel in 2005, with the largest waves arriving since 2007. These refugees make their way to Israel through the Sinai desert after paying high fees to Bedouin smugglers who bring them to the border with Israel. At that point they are required to make their way to the other side, and risk being shot by the Egyptian border police. According to the same Knesset document, among the "infiltrators" currently in Israel, 57.4% are Eritrean and 25.1% are Sudanese.[4]

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Statistical Yearbooks, the number of applications for asylum in Israel increased from 922 in 2004 to 9,087 in 2009.[5] Two years later, the number of applications for asylum is undoubtedly even higher. While surrounding countries in the Middle East, especially Egypt, house significantly larger amounts of refugees from Africa and from other Middle Eastern countries, Israel's political and social order, the relatively stronger economy, and the violent racism against Africans in Egypt and Libya propel people to come to Israel.

The lack of asylum legislation and constant changes in policy toward asylum seekers have made the increased marginalization of asylum seekers in Israel a larger human rights concern.[c] While Israeli civil society organizations including non-governmental organizations strive to aid the asylum seekers with the help of their respective community organizations, there is a need to further explore the many challenges asylum seekers face in Israel.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE

This report is the result of a research project executed between September 2010 and May 2011 for ASSAF, which in Hebrew is an acronym for Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel. This is the second part of a two-part research project. The first report, 'Surviving in Limbo: Lived Experiences of the Sudanese and Eritrean Refugees in Israel', published in June 2011 by ASSAF, focuses on the individual experience of being a refugee or asylum seeker in Israel. This second report attempts to look at communal experiences, voices, aspirations, needs, responses, strengths, and weaknesses.

Because asylum seekers are systematically excluded from crucial state services, they have instead been forced to become reliant on Civil Society Organizations for certain types of aid, primarily humanitarian, psychosocial, health, and legal in nature. This dependency has been exacerbated by continuous changes in Israeli policy regarding asylum seekers over time. However, there is a growing gap between what the asylum seekers describe as their needs in Israel versus what the CSOs and government agencies perceive these needs to be.

Because the Sudanese and Eritreans populations are accustomed to assisting members of their respective groups, and because neither the government nor the CSOs are meeting their needs, the asylum seekers in Israel have instead established various

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[b] Reuven Ziegler of the Israeli Democracy Institute explains that the 'Prevention of Infiltration Law' of Israel "defines an 'infiltrator', inter alia, as a person who entered Israel from Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq or Yemen, and is a resident or a visitor thereof." Section 10 of the law states that "an individual who has entered Israel from one of these countries without a visa or who illegally resides in Israel must disprove that s/he is an infiltrator." See 'A Matter of Definition: On 'Infiltrators' and 'Asylum Seekers' in Israel' for more information (Reuven Ziegler, 2011). The word 'infiltrator' is often used by the Israeli government and by the media to portray asylum seekers not as asylum seekers, but as enemies who are illegally crossing into Israel's borders.

[c] For instance, this is noted in the United States Department of State "2010 Human Rights Report: Israel and the occupied territories."

methods, networks, and means for providing for themselves. Nevertheless, there are still needs that are not being met, which underlines the rationale for this project.

Community groups and organizations, both formal and informal, have been developed and established by different groups within the Eritrean and Sudanese populations since the earliest days of their arrival in Israel. Creating intra-ethnic communities is natural for minority groups and increases resilience among such populations:

> *Affirming a sense of common identity and shared values helps to nurture trust and well-being. Strengthening community structures and leadership enables people to work together to identify their needs and obtain the resources to improve the quality of their lives.*[6]

Esther Doron, who writes about community resilience among Lebanese refugees in Israel, explains that "a resilient community will better face future hardships, may develop fewer symptoms of post-trauma, and enjoy a better quality of social support both within their own community and with neighboring ones."[7]

It is important, therefore, to analyze the mechanisms the community groups in Israel have formulated in order to aid their individual members with many of the issues discussed in the first report of this series as well as to lessen their dependency and subjugation. Community mechanisms addressed in either the first or second report include those dealing with personal conflicts, domestic disputes, political advocacy, access to education, access to housing, and others.

This report focuses especially on community formation and conflict resolution among the South Sudanese, Darfuri, and Eritrean populations currently residing within Israel's borders and presents a mapping of the various community groups, organizations and social and political institutions formed by Sudanese and Eritreans throughout Israel. The focus is strictly on the Eritrean and Sudanese populations because they are the largest populations residing in Israel and because they share a crucial similarity: they are collectively permitted to reside in Israel but may be deported at any particular point if the Israeli government determines that their country of origin has become stable enough.

KEY QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN THIS REPORT INCLUDE:

WHAT COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS WERE SET UP BY ERITREAN AND SUDANESE ASYLUM SEEKERS IN ISRAEL? HOW WERE THEY FORMED AND HOW DO THEY OPERATE? WHAT SERVICES DO THEY PROVIDE?

HOW ARE THESE ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS RESOLVING CONFLICTS AMONG AND BETWEEN COMMUNITY MEMBERS?

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FACED BY ERITREAN AND SUDANESE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS IN ISRAEL?

HOW CAN CSOS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES BEST SUPPORT AND PARTNER WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS?

This report aims to reflect and provide a voice for the asylum seekers in Israel. We hope this report will provide Civil Society Organizations, government agencies, and asylum seeker community groups with useful information and recommendations that will enable them all to work together to achieve the following goals: to decrease asylum seeker dependency on CSOs, to increase their capacity to self-advocate for community and individual needs, to increase their capacity to overcome challenges through self-help and conflict resolution mechanisms, and to strengthen community identities. We hope that this will result in the increased resilience of communities over time, and an improved quality of life and wellbeing for individuals who are asylum seekers in Israel.

METHODOLOGY

This research project primarily utilized qualitative data collection tools. This process began with a literature review of relevant articles and books on Eritrean, Darfuri, and South Sudanese refugee populations, community resilience work among other refugee groups in Israel or in other countries, and the history of South Sudan, Darfur, and Eritrea as they relate to the current refugee situation in Israel and globally. Following the literature review, I met with stakeholders from various CSOs that work with the addressed populations. Sixteen meetings were held with practitioners including staff-members of ASSAF, the Mesila Aid and Information Center (Mesila), Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR), the African Workers Union, the African Refugee Development Center (ARDC), and others.[d]

COMMUNITY SEMI-PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

After learning about the challenges and history, I drafted an interview guide and sought out Community Advisors. My goal was to use participatory research that would account for cultural needs and understandings while interviewing refugees about their lives. I met with thirteen members of the three studied populations --Darfuris, South Sudanese, and Eritreans. I was introduced to these Community Advisors by the practitioners from the CSOs with whom I had met.

Below is a breakdown of the gender and group affiliations of the Community Advisors:

POPULATION	WOMEN	MEN
SOUTH SUDANESE	2	2
DARFURIS	1	2
ERITREANS	1	5

DATA COLLECTION

Based on the needs and advice of the Community Advisors and after they accepted the goals and methodology of the research project, the interview guide was completed and I began conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews with members of these refugee communities. Initially both the CSO practitioners and the Community Advisors introduced me to informants. I located additional respondents through referrals. Overall I conducted interviews with seventy-two Sudanese or Eritrean men, women, and youth. I made a concerted effort to interview people from various backgrounds, places of birth, literacy levels, and educational backgrounds. I sought to interview both people who spoke English or Hebrew and people who did not. Interviews were either conducted directly in English or Hebrew, or with a translator who also spoke Tigrinya[e] or Arabic[f]. Translators were paid for their services and took an active role in shaping the project by providing feedback about how they felt about the research project and interview guide.

Below is a table showing the basic information and amount of interviewees[g]:

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[d] For a list of practitioners interviewed for this report, see Annex Item A in the first report of this series.

[e] Tigrinya is the most common language spoken by the Eritrean population in Israel.

[f] Most of the asylum seekers from Sudan speak Arabic although it is not their first language. Different ethnic groups each have their own native languages, but they learned Arabic as a result of the Sudanese government's enforcement of Arabic language education and use throughout the country.

[g] Personal details on interviewees will not be provided in order to protect the identification of asylum seekers in Israel. See Annex Item B in the first report of this series for information on respondents' without names listed.

POPULATION	WOMEN	YOUTH	MEN
SOUTH SUDANESE	8	3	9
DARFURIS	5	1	23 INCLUDING 6 FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS
ERITREANS	5	3	15

Lastly, I visited a range of community sites including: churches, community centers, community nursery schools, private homes, and Sudanese and Eritrean owned businesses in five cities -- Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan, Ashdod, Arad, and Eilat. I also visited Bialik-Rogazin High School, Cadoorie Youth Village, and Nof Eilot.

CONSTRAINTS

While I conducted as many interviews and site visits as possible, obviously the pool of interviews and observations do not reflect every community organization of every city where asylum seekers live in Israel. However, I have aimed to map out as representative and extensive a sample of community organizations and groups as possible.

GENDER It was more challenging to interview women as there are fewer female asylum seekers in Israel, and many of them were uncomfortable being interviewed. Some of the women from both Sudan and Eritrea brought their husbands or partners to the interviews with them, which presented a challenge to discussing personal issues. Another constraint involving women participants is that fewer of them speak either Hebrew or English than the men do, such that almost all interviews with women were conducted with the help of a translator. Bringing a translator into the interview who is unknown to the interviewee also may have made women less comfortable to speak openly.

TRUST Many Eritrean men were not comfortable being interviewed with a translator whom they did not know and requested to bring their own translators, or to try to speak English or Hebrew when their level of either language was not that strong.

TRANSLATION The translators did a fantastic job, but at times there may have been words or expressions that were difficult to translate and questions that did not get fully answered as a result of this. Also, I should have had the informed consent document translated in written form so that respondents could read the consent forms on their own.
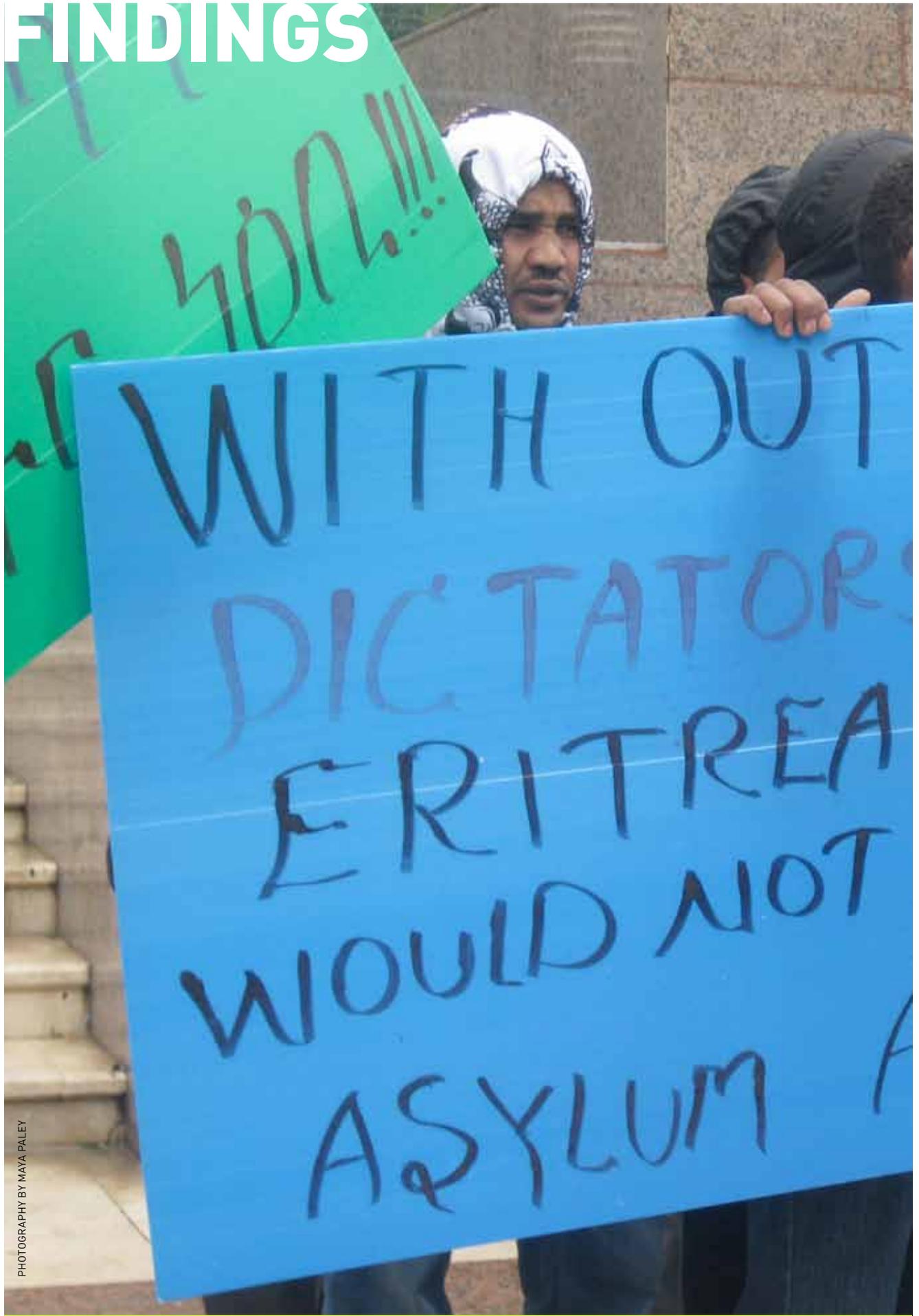
BACKGROUND ON THE ASYLUM SEEKER POPULATIONS IN ISRAEL

DARFURIS

There are an estimated 3,000 Darfuris in Israel to date. Darfuris in Eilat claim that there are around 300 Darfuris currently living there, including between 12-15 women. At the time of writing, there are about 50 Darfuris living in Ashdod and about another 50 in Arad, all of whom are men. The rest of the population resides in the Tel Aviv area.

The Darfuris are well organized and maintain strong networks with each other throughout Israel and abroad. They are a politically active community, aimed at affecting change in their home country as well as at advocating on their own behalf for improved policies toward asylum seekers in Israel. The population has created many formalized organizations and groups, which will be mapped out below, but there are also informal networks and groups throughout Israel that are meeting humanitarian and educational needs. The Darfuris in Israel are organized both regionally as Darfuris as well as by their ethnic affiliations. The main ethnic groups residing in Israel include the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa, each of which has a small apartment that they rent out to members of their community who need shelter. There are small populations of other minority ethnic groups from Darfur as well.

While there are formal groups[h] existent in Tel Aviv, Ashdod, and Arad, the Darfuris in Eilat have no community center at this time. Eilat has a dearth of formal community organizations among the Darfuri population, but there are informal groups in which English-speaking Darfuris teach other Darfuris for nominal fees.

The Darfuris are diverse in their levels of religious practice. Many who have made their way to Israel are secular even though they grew up in Muslim homes. Some are more religious and go to mosque in Jerusalem on Fridays. The mosques in Israel, especially those in central Israel, are ethnically and nationally diverse so they have not become ethnic community centers. Some people will gather in private homes to practice religion together. There does not appear to be pressure to practice religion from within the community.

SOUTH SUDANESE

There are estimates that at most 2,000[i] South Sudanese currently live in Israel. The South Sudanese are also well connected and organized both between cities in Israel and with contacts abroad. The majority of the population is Christian, either Presbyterian or Evangelical, and reasonably religious. Many South Sudanese are congregants of one or more churches. Some attend one church on certain days of the week and another on other days.

There are several ethnic groups among the South Sudanese population in Israel, including the Nuer, the Dinka, the Yei, the Baria, and others. The majority ethnic group in Israel is the Dinka, who are also the majority in the Tel Aviv area. In Arad, however, the majority ethnic group is the Nuer, where there are 250-300 Nuer people. South Sudanese asylum seekers of all the different ethnic groups are united over their common struggle to achieve independence in their home country, which is scheduled to materialize in July 2011.

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[h] The term 'formal groups' refers to groups that have an organizational structure as opposed to 'informal groups', which refer to looser social networks.

[i] This estimate is based on interviews with South Sudanese asylum seekers in Israel conducted for this report.

BLESSING THOSE WHO RETURN

"At that time gifts will brought to the Lord Almighty from a people tall and smooth-skinned, from a people feared far and wide…the gift will be brought to Mount Zion, the place of the name of the Lord Almighty."—Isaiah 18, The New Testament.[8]

The verse from Isaiah 18 refers to the people of Cush, the modern day Sudan. For many South Sudanese in Israel, the referendum and upcoming independence from Sudan in July 2011 is the fulfillment of a biblical prophecy as expressed in Isaiah 18 and in which 'Mount Zion' is South Sudan. Thus, there is an overall feeling of excitement when South Sudanese discuss returning to their homeland as they bear the gifts they have obtained while dispersed throughout the world as a result of the ongoing conflict in their country. As over 500 South Sudanese have returned home through repatriation flights from Israel over the past two years, community churches have created special ceremonies to bless, encourage, and offer advice to those who are returning. When community members return to South Sudan, church leaders purportedly believe that they are executing a prophecy that is important and inevitable, albeit risky. During these ceremonies, speakers are called upon to bless the returnees. While community members take pride in and support those who return to South Sudan, they also tend to fear the dangers their friends may encounter upon returning to an unstable region. Most of the community members would like to return to their home country one day, but are waiting for a semblance of stability and security there before doing so.[j]

ERITREANS

ERITREANS IN ISRAEL: AN OLD PHENOMENON

A group of Eritreans arrived to Israel between forty and fifty years ago. They are spread out between Haifa, Eilat, Ashdod, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv. There were between 400-500 of them to begin with and they were largely granted residence permits by the Israeli government, except for a few who arrived in the 1990s. In 1998, this group became organized as a community in order to help the newcomers arriving in the 1990s with obstacles they faced seeking out medical assistance and other humanitarian needs. The group only met a few times a year when there were emergency cases and a member needed help paying for a costly operation or medical procedure. Eventually, the group ceased to exist because most of the people left Israel for the United States or England. A number of these oldcomers are still living in Israel.

The current Eritrean population originates mostly from the south of the country, from cities like Dekamhare and Sanafe. There are many Eritreans from the capital, Asmara, as well. The majority of Eritreans in Israel are from the Tigrinya ethnic group. In Tel Aviv, the Eritrean population divides itself based on village of origin. They are not considered full members of a village if they were not born there, but they do obtain some inclusive status if their parents were from there or the surrounding region. Most of the Eritreans in Israel live in the Tel Aviv area, with the next largest population residing in Eilat, where there are a few thousand Eritreans. There is a population of about 1,000 Eritreans in Jerusalem and smaller populations living in Pardes Katz, Haifa, and other cities throughout Israel.

Most of the Eritreans in Israel are Coptic Orthodox Christians, but there are minorities of Catholics, Muslims, Evangelical Christians, and Jehovah's Witnesses as well. There is diversity in terms of the level of religiosity among the population. While the churches are always full of congregants and most Eritreans do embrace their religious affiliations, many Eritreans, mostly single men, do not attend church services and do not aspire to be involved in the church.
Aside from the established churches, there are informal Bible study groups that Eritrean asylum seekers create in their homes

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[j] Refer to the 'Repatriation to Sudan: How Voluntary is Voluntary?' section of the first report of this series for information on the repatriation process.

to discuss religious texts with their friends and acquaintances. One woman helped create a group of 20-30 women and men while living in Libya. Those who came to Israel from her group in Libya have continued meeting and studying together on a weekly basis.

While the Eritreans do not have many formal community organizations, there are many informal networks and groups that provide humanitarian support and assistance to community members. Informal networks of people are connected by their village or regional affiliation. As their ability to aid each other is limited due to both time and economic constraints, these groups primarily assist each other during emergencies. Groups of people will gather money together to help people in Sinai who are being tortured and locked up until they produce the requested ransom. Eritrean communities also send money to assist with funerals of people who die in Sinai on the way to Israel. There are no formal leaders for these networks.

ERITREAN ORTHODOX COPTIC CHRISTIANITY

On Christmas, the various churches in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem organize trips to Bethlehem for busloads of Eritreans. However, because most Eritreans are Coptic Christians, they use a different calendar and do not celebrate Christmas on December 25th. Rather, their Christmas is on January 7th. Also, the year is different from the Gregorian calendar. Rather than it being 2011, it is currently 2003 for the Coptics who go by a calendar that contains 13 months in each year. Also, prayers are conducted in the Ge˙ez language, an ancient Semitic language to which Tigrinya, Amharic, Arabic, and Hebrew are all related. Only the priests and saints speak Ge˙ez. Fasts are also very important for religious Coptic Eritreans, and they fast several times a week. On Fridays they do not consume milk or meat all day long. They also fast completely from midnight on Fridays until three in the afternoon on Saturdays while they hold prayer services.

FORMAL COMMUNITY FORMATION: WHAT EXISTS?

Some community groups founded in Israel have taken the form both traditional groups modeled after what existed in their home countries and villages, while others were modeled to be similar to the typical Israeli CSO. There are four main types of community groups among the Sudanese and Eritrean populations in Israel today: political, humanitarian, religious, and conflict resolution groups.

SUDANESE

ARAD

SUDANESE COMMUNITY CENTER

The Darfuri community founded a community center in January 2010, which is mainly used for educational purposes. The center provides English classes for the whole Sudanese community, but it is mostly Darfuris who utilize the space. There are English classes for intermediate and advanced English speakers taught by volunteer students from Ben Gurion University.

OLIVE BRANCH

Olive Branch is a non-profit organization founded by Dr. Eldan Clem. It is a language learning center whose goal is to promote "the cultures and languages of the peoples in the Near East and to foster co-existence among these historic peoples."[9] The Olive Branch has courses specifically geared toward assisting Sudanese refugees in Arad with learning Hebrew and English.

NUER COMMUNITY CENTER

The Nuer community center, which was opened in 2007, functions primarily as a church space. There was also a nursery school in the center and women from the community were paid to baby-sit the young children there. The center is currently on hiatus as the community searches for a new location.

DINKA COMMUNITY CENTER

The Dinka community maintains a nursery school, which closes at 5 pm everyday. After 7 pm the center reopens and becomes a language-learning center for adults where primarily English is taught.

NUBA MOUNTAINS COMMUNITY CENTER

The center acts as a nursery school during the day and as an educational center in the evenings. There is one teacher for the nursery school that fifteen children attend daily. From 5-9 pm, there is an after-school program for kids in which a community member teaches two English classes. The classes are split between 5-8 year olds and 8-12 year olds. Students pay 75 NIS each month for the class.

CHURCHES

There are two churches that the Sudanese in Arad maintain—a 7th Day Adventist church and a Presbyterian church. There is also a Catholic church, which is not run by the asylum seekers. Church services in the Sudanese-run churches are conducted in Arabic, Nuer, Dinka, Nuba, and English. There are no pastors, but each ethnic group has a church leader.

TEL AVIV[k]

DARFURIS

SUDAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT (SLM)/SUDAN LIBERATION ARMY (SLA)

Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM)/Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) The SLM office, opened in early 2008, was closed in the fall of 2010 for a few months, but a new office has since been established. Members each pay a fee to maintain the rent. Darfuris claim that most people arriving to Israel from Darfur are members of SLM to varying degrees. There are over 30 active members who attend weekly meetings, but many more attend meetings if there are important topics to discuss. During meetings, the discussions revolve mainly around changing the political situation in Darfur and, at times, the political situation for refugees in Israel. Abdul Waheed Muhammed al Nur, SLA's The leader who resides in France, visited Israel in 2009 and solidified the organization's relations with the Israeli government through meetings with members of the government and with academics from Bar Ilan University. SLM/A members hope for Darfur's independence from Sudan and those who reside in Israel are in constant communication with members in Darfur, other regions of Sudan, the United States, France, Kenya, Egypt and elsewhere via phone and email.

B'NAI DARFUR

Founded in 2007, B'nai Darfur is a registered non-profit organization that exists to support and unite the Darfuri community in Israel. It provides assistance to newcomer Darfuris by helping them find shelter and food. It also provides a space for discussing issues relevant to the community as well as for cultural events. While B'nai Darfur's goals are primarily humanitarian, the organization has political goals geared toward Israeli policy as well. B'nai Darfur holds elections for leadership positions, but it is unclear how often these are held. There are about thirty active members who are almost all men.

DARFURI SHELTER

There are between 80-100 men who sleep at the shelter each night, which is a room in the basement of a building. The elected Humanitarian Director of B'nai Darfur is directing the Darfuri shelter. Members of the Darfuri community in Tel Aviv cover the rent for the shelter-- 6,000 NIS per month. Israelis have donated other items like a washing machine, a dryer, blankets, and mattresses.

THE FUR ASSOCIATION IN ISRAEL

The center provides English classes mostly taught by one Darfuri community member. There have also been volunteers from

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[k] The Tel Aviv section on the Sudanese communities in Tel Aviv is divided into a section on the Darfuris and a section on the South Sudanese as this division exists between these populations in Tel Aviv.

the United States and elsewhere who have taught English at the center. The center also maintains a shelter that houses up to twenty people at a time and is mainly for newcomers.

MASALIT COMMUNITY CENTER

The center is a community center for Masalit people, a minority ethnic group from Darfur, who use the space for political discussions.

SOUTH SUDANESE

SOUTH SUDANESE CENTER

The center serves as a meeting place for the community to discuss relevant issues and to organize cultural and political events. It is also a space for people to sit, watch television, and spend time together. There are three rooms with televisions in each room. All members are expected to pay fees of 200 NIS each month to cover the rent and bills. Often, certain members will pitch in more money to cover the costs when funds are short.

NUBA MOUNTAINS CENTER

The population from the Nuba Mountains region of Sudan maintains a community center that hosts community discussions and other programs including Hebrew and English courses for its members.

CHURCHES

SOUTH SUDANESE CUSH CHURCH

The church is Evangelical Christian and is led by a South Sudanese pastor who studied in Nazareth. There are several leaders of the church. A pastor from Jerusalem donates funds to the church each month out of donations he receives from donors in the United States.

THE CHURCH OF THE NEW CUSH IN ISRAEL

The church was established in October 2007 and provides Bible study programs for adults and youth. The church is affiliated with the Apostolic Church, located in Acco, Israel.

EILAT

SUDAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT (SPLM)/ARMY (SPLA)

This office was established in December 2010 for South Sudanese SPLA activities. The goal of the office is to create a stronger relationship between the upcoming South Sudanese government and the Israeli government. The office is mainly being used to conduct interviews with people interested in voluntary repatriation to South Sudan through Operation Blessing International.[l] The SPLA council members also organize events such as a celebration for South Sudan's independence in July 2011.

NOF EILOT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

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[l] Refer to the section 'Repatriation to Sudan: How Voluntary is Voluntary?' in the first report of this series for more information.

There is an informal adult education program at Nof Eilot where community members teach English to other adult members in the evenings at no cost.

NUBA MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY CENTER

This is an educational and gathering center for the Nuba Mountain people in Eilat.

JOHN AND JUDY PEX'S 'SHELTER' HOSTEL

This is a hostile run by John and Judy Pex who have been supporting and advocating for the Sudanese people in Eilat since 2007. The 'Shelter' is often utilized as a community center by the asylum seekers, where Bible study programs and other community meetings are held.

CHURCHES

The Catholic and Evangelical Churches provide services and programs in the same location. The Catholic Church has a congregation that includes South Sudanese, Filipinos, and people of other ethnicities, but the pastor is South Sudanese. The two churches conduct services at different times and days of the week to accommodate all of their congregants. The two churches often celebrate events and holidays together even though they are of different denominations.

ASHDOD

There is one Darfuri community center in Ashdod that is only used for English courses. This is the first and only community related center or organization located in Ashdod to date.

ERITREANS

TEL AVIV

ERITREAN POLITICAL ASYLUM SEEKERS COMMITTEE (EPASC)

EPASC was formed in December 2010 during a meeting held in Park Levinsky. The managing committee has five elected members with different leadership roles and the committee is transitional. Elections are supposed to be held twice a year. The main goal of EPASC is to advocate on behalf of Eritreans to the Israeli public, CSOs, and government on challenges they face in Israel including employment, housing, visa status, and healthcare. The committee would like the Israeli government to provide Eritrean asylum seekers with basic necessities, like the permission to work in the country while they are here.

ERITREAN YOUTH FOR A DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (EYDC)

Established in April 2011, EYDC is aimed at affecting political change in Eritrea. There are seventy members of the general assembly, five executive committee members, and 355 general members of the group. The group's goal is to "bring radical change and to instill democracy"[m] in Eritrea. They have yet to find somewhere specific to meet and therefore hold meetings in members' apartments or in parks. The group's members are involved in media and communications, political advocacy, or other committees. One of their mottos is: "changes for us and by us." EYDC focuses on and encourages youth to get involved in their political movement.

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[m] These are the goals as expressed by one of the leaders and founders of the group.

CHURCHES

CHURCH OF MEDEHANIALEM (CHURCH OF THE WORLD SAVIOR)

The church was established in January 2008. The congregation has several deacons, priests, and saints. Deacons and priests lead prayer services and maintain bible study and choir programs. There are also at least two monks living in Tel Aviv who lead study groups for people who want to become clergy. The monks also preach to the congregants during services and are highly respected by the religious community. Between 300-400 people attend services on Friday nights and roughly fifty attend on Saturday mornings.

The church is supported through donations from church members only and pays the salaries of two employees who conduct administrative duties for the church. All others, including priests, volunteer their time to the church. The church has a relationship with Coptic churches in other cities including Ashdod and Jerusalem, with whom they visit holy sites and celebrate various holidays.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

St. Mary's Church conducts services every evening and on Saturday mornings. In terms of religious practices, rituals are similar to the practices described above.

PARDES KATZ COMMUNITY GROUP

The Pardes Katz neighborhood in B'nai Brak is comprised of about fifty Eritreans who have organized a community group to provide each other with small amounts of money for emergencies such as medical assistance or sending bodies of deceased community members back to Eritrea. The group was organized in 2008 by an oldcomer Eritrean who had arrived to Israel in 1997. The group meets on an as-needed basis whenever a community member has a problem.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

SOUTH SUDANESE

LEADERSHIP

Many conflicts between community members are resolved by community leaders, sometimes called elders, who are typically men. In Israel, because families are torn apart and not many people are much older than the average asylum seeker who is in their late 20s or early 30s, the communities have adapted themselves by distinguishing certain people who are considered to be wise and respectable even if they are not literally older than the general population.

Community leaders are chosen based on their ability to communicate well with Israelis (i.e. they must be able speak Arabic and English or Hebrew), their ability to communicate well with everyone within their community, and their problem-solving capabilities. They are expected to be available at any hour. For example, if a community member is taken to the police station, the leader is expected to arrive to the station as soon as possible. The leader is expected to create a relationship with the local police and to be able to explain Sudanese problems to them as effectively as possible.

DOMESTIC DISPUTES

For domestic disputes, ethnic communities resolve conflicts among themselves, often with the help of a community leader. For small-scale conflicts, some women explained that in South Sudan they would have gone to their mothers or other women in their families to discuss their problems. However, for more significant issues, like a violent fight with one's husband, they would have called upon elders from their villages to assist in the problem-solving process. In the case that the husband asks his wife to leave the house, she would go to the sultan or to her pastor and discuss the problem with him.[n] The sultans or pastors would likely consult the women to return home, discouraging divorce as much as possible. Women are also indirectly discouraged from divorcing both because the husbands often obtain custody over the children and because women usually end up with no financial support after a divorce.

Mechanisms are similar in Israel, as community leaders are called upon to advise a couple in dispute. However, the circumstances in Israel differ from those in South Sudan for two main reasons. First, South Sudanese women in Israel have the capacity to call the police who will arrest and often imprison their partners or husbands in cases of domestic abuse. Also, divorce is more acceptable in Israel and easier to manage, as women are able to work in Israel and support their livelihoods. One last difference involves the family support that women have when raising their children in South Sudan. Without extended families in Israel, the community members have filled the void by assisting with caring for the children of couples going through domestic disputes.

'A' is the chairman of the Catholic Church's Council in Eilat. Part of his role involves helping fighting couples resolve their problems by trying to come up with a solution suited for both parties with the goal of avoiding the involvement of the police. 'A' discourages women from calling the police or leaving their husbands: he is concerned that the families will suffer more if the parents separate. 'A' feels that his conversations with such couples have been helpful in reducing the number of women who call the police to complain about their husbands, a fact he believes is evidence of a reduction in domestic violence. However, it is unclear whether this approach actually correlates with a reduction of domestic and intimate partner violence, as women might be calling the police less often with domestic violence continuing at the same rate.

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[n] The sultans and pastors in South Sudan are generally men.

OTHER TYPES OF CONFLICT

> **THE NUER MODEL**
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> The Nuer have a functioning and organized system to resolve conflicts between community members. There is a leader of the Nuer population in Israel who is elected each year. Beyond the national leader, there are five leaders, all men, for each of the various clan lines within the Nuer population. The five leaders work together to come up with solutions for problems and challenges faced by the entire Nuer community, but each leader resolves smaller disputes that occur within his group.
>
> One of the goals of this model is to unite the Nuer community in Israel. The Nuer relies on each other and any divisions could reduce their capacity to provide much needed support mechanisms for their community members. If there is a dispute between people over money, the Nuer community is willing to cover the costs and pay the person back who is owed. The borrower will often return the funds when possible to the community, although this is not required.

If there are problems between people who are not related to each other, the community leader will sit with representatives from the families of those in dispute and discuss the problem for as long as it takes to find a solution, after which the representatives will discuss the ideas with the specific people in conflict. It is customary for someone who has a dispute with someone else to request to speak to that person's brother or closest relative about the problem. However, if the person does not have a close relative in Israel, the South Sudanese adapt by meeting with their closest friend to discuss the problem.

When a person from South Sudan suffers from depression or other psychological problems, the family is the first unit to get involved. In Israel, however, where most South Sudanese do not have their extended families present, the respected community leaders often get involved in coming up with a solution for the person. The most common solutions are to reach out to the community leaders. Seeking formal therapy in the form of psychological counseling is rare.

DARFURIS

LEADERSHIP

The respected people or elders who maintained traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in Darfur were well known in their villages. These mechanisms do not exist in the same way in Israel because people do not have the familial, regional networks and community ties that were established over long periods of time. Entire status and community systems were destroyed and people came to Israel without any connections to each other aside from being from the same region. In Israel, however, these respected people are not known, as the community structures from back home have been destroyed. 'H' expresses the effects of this difference:

> *Here the life is different because lot of people they don't know each other. The people will meet after 2-3 months. Until now here we don't know each other good, but in Darfur we have like, we are here in village and in this village they know all, but here there is a lot of problems in Israel. We can't go meet each other and we don't get to know each other.*

Darfuris have managed to create community structures since their arrival in Israel and certain respected elders have emerged. An elder is chosen based on both his family background (again, most elders are men), combined with his personal qualities, such as wisdom and integrity. For the Darfuri population, elders are highly respected and are considered to be problem solvers in their respected communities. Darfuris revere the elders to the point that the communities will take financial responsibility over them and assist them if they are unable to work.

DOMESTIC DISPUTES

Darfuris typically call upon family members to help resolve domestic problems. In Israel, however, without family members around, they often ask close friends to get involved. Many women support each other while dealing with domestic and intimate partner violence. Traditional community conflict resolution mechanisms are the first tool for resolving domestic disputes among Darfuris. Only after these methods have been completely exhausted, and with much forethought, will a Darfuri turn to the police as a method for resolving their conflicts. Calling the police is simply not culturally accepted, as many Darfuris did not trust the police in Darfur and lack trust toward the police in Israel as well because they feel they are discriminated against

by police officers.

The women are in a difficult position—they do not trust the police in Israel nor do they have any power to change or reduce domestic and intimate partner violence within Darfuri families in Israel. Some abused women call their women friends who call the police for them. Other times, Israeli neighbors call the police upon overhearing disputes. The women are usually not enthusiastic about their husbands being taken to jail by the police because it translates into increased stress and pressure for them.[o] Calling the police on one's husband is considered offensive. For such an act, the woman may suffer repercussions in Darfur, such as beatings from her own family. Family beatings do not seem to occur too often in Israel, if at all, as most people reside here without their extended families present. Some of the women respondents for this report admit that they would not call the police in the event that their husbands hit them. 'M', for instance, says that she does not call the police when she's dealing with domestic disputes: "I do not want to create any problems in my home." It seems that one of the mechanisms to deal with domestic disputes is to silence the women, who appear to fear calling the police or speaking up against their partners.

OTHER TYPES OF CONFLICT

The Darfuris aim to solve conflicts on their own before getting the police involved. In 2010, a Sudanese man killed an Eritrean man in Israel. Three Darfuri community members got together to come up with a way to ease the tensions between the two populations. They decided that the most effective approach would be to utilize the connections many Darfuri business members in Neve Shaanan had made with Eritreans there. Through these connections, the three Darfuris approached friends of their friends from the Eritrean community and spoke with them about how to go about approaching the close relatives and friends of the person who was killed. They then sought out respected elders from both communities and held a meeting in Neve Shaanan with Eritrean community members about the situation. These community members gave advice to the Darfuris about how to go about apologizing to the closer relatives and friends of the deceased. They then held a meeting with the closer relatives of the deceased in the home of an elder Darfuri and the Darfuri elders brought gifts and specific foods and apologized to the Eritrean elders on behalf of the Darfuri population. The Eritrean community seems to have been satisfied with this gesture, which diffused the conflict between the two populations.

ERITREANS

LEADERSHIP

In Eritrea, elders are respected members of the community whose words carry weight among the people. These elders are men who are not religious or political figures. In Tigrinya, this system is called 'Baito'. The 'Baito' system exists mainly in villages outside of urban areas. These elders are not selected based on their levels of education, nor on their family ties. They are chosen by the community based on their wisdom, charisma, and humility to act as traditional judges who resolve disputes between people without the interference of a legal court system. The 'Baito' still function and are well-respected in many rural parts of Eritrea.

> *Baito is a kind of gathering so for this gathering there are people who are supposed to make all the gatherings happen and these people are key people for the community…They transfer information, share ideas…and give advice and take information from the society and tackle the problems which may face the society. They inform each other. These people are not governmental. They are never interested in politics. If anybody [is] interested in politics, nobody trusts them. These are trusted people. They are usually selected on their beliefs and the people select them from their heart.[p]*

In Israel, if close friends cannot resolve the issues, then elders are invited to help do so. In Levinsky Park, groups of Eritreans gather on Fridays and Saturdays. They are divided based on villages or regions in Eritrea. These informal networks have chosen

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[o] Refer to the first report of this series for details on gender relations among the Sudanese and Eritrean populations in Israel.
[p] This quote was stated by 'K', an Eritrean asylum seeker living in Tel Aviv.

a few people to act as the Baito of their newfound groups—to resolve conflicts between people and to lead discussions on issues group members are facing.

DOMESTIC DISPUTES

To resolve domestic disputes, Eritrean women usually go to their parents or other family members for advice. The woman's family tries to discuss the issue with the mother of the husband. If this does not resolve the problem, the two families will meet to discuss the problem. Most women are not willing to discuss that they are dealing with domestic violence with others. If they do, it will only be with very close and trusted friends. Some women expressed that they would talk to a religious figure here in Israel if they were suffering from domestic violence. There are also women with traditional roles designated for solving women's problems, but this is not very common in either Eritrea or Israel. In Israel, it is often the case that men will call upon their relatives or close friends to resolve disputes between themselves and their female partners.

COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

SUDANESE

Darfuri and South Sudanese asylum seekers both invest in their community organizations and appreciate the assistance and support they receive from them. Groups and organizations are formed in order to provide humanitarian, educational opportunities, a space for community events and discussions, and to advocate for political change on behalf of the respective asylum seeker communities.

Most of these groups felt that neither the Israeli government nor the CSOs were meeting the needs of their community members. Therefore, they formed this group to fill the gap between the needs of the asylum seekers and those that are being met.

During the focus group conducted with several men living at one of the Darfuri community-run shelters, it was clear that the men living there appreciate the services they have received from the Darfuri community in Israel. They believe the community is doing its best to help newcomers and those who need support, but they also feel that the Israeli government is creating obstacles for their communities. These obstacles prevent them from assisting their communities their members as effectively as possible.

There have been some concerns in the past expressed by individual Darfuri asylum seekers about their own community organizations. Examples of such concerns include disorganized leadership, unresolved disputes between community leaders, inter-ethnic conflict, and the exclusion of certain people from leadership positions including people with differing opinions and women. These concerns have led some Darfuris to disconnect from the formal Darfuri organizations. Some of the Darfuri respondents expressed having expectations that the Darfuri community organizations would support them more actively upon their arrival, but found that these expectations were not fulfilled. 'M', a man from Darfur, explains his frustration with one of the Darfuri organizations in Tel Aviv:

> *When I came to Israel at first and I was in Be'er Sheva, first I have the [phone] number of the Darfuri organization. I call them [and say] I have some problems. I have no money to come to Tel Aviv. 'Please try to help me for this how to come to Tel Aviv.' They say no—'we have no money for helping for this.'*

'M' ended up finding an individual who could help him pay for his bus ticket to Tel Aviv. "I said why? This is Darfuri organization [of the] community. Why they not help just like [with] this problem?" explains 'M', who was especially frustrated that the Darfuri organization had an office and a hotline but could not pay for his bus ticket. As is acknowledged by community members themselves, Sudanese community leaders are all facing the same obstacles when trying to maintain organizations and groups in Israel.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

The most urgent challenge is securing enough finances to sustain programs. While one of the Darfuri shelters in Tel Aviv is fulfilling an important role by providing accommodation for up to 100 Darfuri men each night, the shelter's director and volunteers involved in maintaining it are constantly worried about paying the following month's rent. The shelter was established with the financial support of two American donors who signed a three-month contract and who gave a one-month rent deposit

to the building's landlord. The contract is in the name of the shelter's director, an asylum seeker from Darfur himself. The director cannot cover the costs with his income and there are times when community members and other donations do not cover all the costs needed to sustain the place. This puts the director in a difficult position and consistently creates a monthly sense of anxiety that the shelter will have to be shut down.

Disputes over finances have resulted in the split of community groups, such as the South Sudanese churches in Tel Aviv. In 2007 there was one church for all the South Sudanese in Tel Aviv, but eventually some of the congregants broke off and established another church over a financial disagreement. The church leaders were accusing each other of funneling funds so some decided to break off in the end. With limited financial resources available to maintain community organizations, it seems inevitable that competition over resources may emerge and that conflicts over finances will surface.

TIME CONSTRAINTS

Time is another challenge faced by asylum seekers groups. SLM members, for example, feel that at times they are unable to be as effective and efficient as they would like to be due to time constraints. Asylum seekers often work extra hours and many work in physical labor, so they are thoroughly exhausted by the end of the day. Also, asylum seekers' work schedules differ as some work early morning shifts, others work at night, and some even work overnight shifts. Thus, setting up meeting times is difficult.

POLICY IMPACTS

Israeli policy changes related to the status of asylum seekers in Israel have impacted the effectiveness and sustainability of community groups. For example, one of the reasons why the previous Darfuri shelter in Tel Aviv, run by SLM members in 2008, was closed down was because those managing and maintaining the shelter were no longer permitted to live or work in the central region of the country due to the Hadera-Gadera policy.[q]

Also, fears and anxieties related to certain policies have caused community leaders to make hasty decisions harmful to the sustainability of community programs. For example, the Darfuri Community Center held computer classes at one point, but the managers ended up selling several of the computers after the Israeli government decided to build a detention facility.[r] The managers were driven to sell the equipment out of fear that they might need extra money for themselves and for community members in the event of an emergency (like trying to leave the country before being put in the new detention facility being built in the Negev). The Center would like to buy new computers to resume the computer courses, but they do not have the means to do so at this time.

STRUGGLES WITH LOCAL ISRAELIS

The Darfuri asylum seekers in both Arad and Eilat have encountered many challenges when depending on local Israelis to meet their needs. This has been a constant barrier for community leaders and groups in these two Southern cities. Many community centers have not been able to renew their rent contracts, as landlords no longer wanted them running centers from their apartments. Thus, most of the Sudanese community centers in Arad and Eilat have been on hiatus for months at a time while searching for a new location. Israeli landlords, especially those in Arad and Eilat, are not enthusiastic about renting an apartment to people with a three-month "conditional release" visa. Whether they fear asylum seekers will be deported after three months and thus breach contract or whether they simply do not want Africans in their buildings for racist reasons, Israeli landlords hesitate to rent to asylum seekers, making the availability of community spaces a recurring obstacle. Sometimes, Darfuri community leaders can resolve this issue by recruiting Darfuris who have A5 visas to sign the rent contracts, but this solution is usually unavailable to South Sudanese community leaders.Centers in Arad that have been shut down for several

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[q] In early 2008, the government passed the Hadera-Gedera clause forcing asylum seekers to move outside of central Israel in order to get their work permits renewed. Only those with A5 or B1 visas did not have to move. The policy was lifted in July 2009.

[r] Refer to the 'Israel's Current Policy' section of the first report of this series.

months include the Sudanese Community Center, the Darfuri Community Center, the Nuer Community Center (as of time of research still in search of a location), and the Dinka Community Center.

CHALLENGES WITH LEADERSHIP

Two other recurring issues have emerged as reasons why some community centers have not survived. The first is when community leaders cannot agree about who the leaders will be and what their respective positions are. There was a South Sudanese community center in 2007, but it was soon closed due to disputes between leaders over who the president of the committee would be. Since then, no community center has been established by the South Sudanese population in Eilat.

Another recurring theme is the dependency that certain community organizations have on local Israelis. There have been several organizations that have dissolved when Israelis involved in managing them decided to discontinue their work with the community organizations. One example of this is the Sudanese Association in Arad, which recently dissolved after two years when one of the Israeli founders left the organization. Another example is B'nai Darfur, which ceased to exist for two years when local Israelis left the board. Fortunately, B'nai Darfur has managed to rebuild itself as a grass-roots Darfuri organization.

WOMEN

There was a women's group in Eilat in 2009 with goals to advocate to the Israeli government about the problems asylum seeker women face in Eilat. There were about twelve women in the group. The women wanted to advocate regarding the lack of a nursery school for their children. Another critical concern for the women was that their older children be permitted to attend Israeli municipal schools. The asylum seeker children are segregated into a separate school than the Israeli children in Eilat, resulting in many children staying home, as they have not been satisfied with the education they have been provided with. The communities in Eilat, especially the women, are very concerned about the children who are either spending time on the streets or sitting in their homes all day long because they do not go to school.

One Darfuri woman, 'A', who was involved in forming the group in 2009 feels that many of the women did not invest enough into the group, which is why it quickly dissolved. 'A' feels that the main barrier the Sudanese women face is the impact of the combination of government proclamations against the Sudanese living in Israel along with the changing visa policies. For 'A', the impact of the limbo she and her friends live in cause her people to lose hope and to want to leave Israel. Consequently, 'A' explains, no one has the desire, patience, or motivation to create a women's group. Four of the twelve relevant women already went back to South Sudan. 'A' would still like for there to be a women's group in Eilat, but she does not know how it would work as even finding a space for meetings and events seems like too big of an obstacle to overcome.

In Arad, there was also a women's committee at one point, but, according to 'N' from South Sudan, when the Sudanese Community Center was established the women were told to shut down their committee. When the women's committee did exist, they helped find solutions for domestic disputes. They also helped solve household problems women were dealing with unrelated to their relationships with their partners. For example, if a family's water or gas were turned off, the women's committee members would visit the municipality to complain and resolve the problem. 'N' is frustrated that the women's committee was dissolved. She says the men claimed that it was not in their traditional culture for the women to form their own committees and, thus, it was not necessary. 'N' disagrees and says that it is part of her culture for the women to help and support each other, which was the goal of the committee.

ERITREANS

LACK OF TRUST

A general lack of trust between Eritrean people is the most problematic barrier to the self-organization and the potential to achieve among the Eritrean population in Israel. There is a common paranoia that one's friends or even one's own father could be a spy for the Eritrean government. Eritreans interviewed for this research explained that in each village in Eritrea there are local spies funded by the dictatorship to ensure that all eligible adults do not evade their military service and to ensure that no suspicious, anti-government activities are occurring.

The dispute between two Eritrean churches is a prime example of the divisions in the Eritrean population in Israel. Originally, there was only one church in Tel Aviv. The church wanted to send for a tabernacle, which would legitimate the church as a Coptic church. However, the Coptic Pope must bless tabernacles in order to legitimate a church, which was impossible as the Eritrean Pope has been under house arrest since 2006. Some church members felt that a reasonable solution would be to

bring a tabernacle from Egypt that could be blessed by the Egyptian Coptic Pope instead. The result of this was a disagreement because sending for a tabernacle through Egypt meant the church would have to work with the Eritrean Embassy in Israel to bring the tabernacle to the country. Working with, or asking for assistance from, the Eritrean Embassy symbolizes complying with or supporting the Eritrean dictatorship to some Eritreans. Essentially, those who decided to bring the tabernacle from Egypt stayed at the original church while the others formed a new church whose members still contend that the first church has a relationship with the Eritrean government and that its leaders are working with the Embassy to threaten members of the new church. For example, one woman's mother was recently thrown into jail in Eritrea presumably because the authorities there learned that she was involved in the new church in Tel Aviv. Also, the wife of a priest of the new church, who lives in Eritrea, was imprisoned, which community members believe is due to her husband›s involvement in the new church.

Some of the new church's community members believe that the Eritrean Embassy collects money from the old church. Many Eritreans harbor deep fears about their Embassy in Israel. One man says:

> *They don't give us the right to talk, to discuss issues about our religious leaders, about our life. They don't give us our rights. They are pressuring us, so we don't need to do any connection. If you get a chance, you want to change, to replace them. This kind of government is really a dictator. The people don't have any rights.*

Members of the old church deny that there is any relationship between the Eritrean Embassy in Israel and their church. Old church members also reason that the division of the churches occurred due to differences in religious and worship traditions. According to respondents, the Eritrean Political Asylum Seekers Committee tried to unite the two churches at one point, but many of the church leaders were not interested.

For some Eritreans, no community or religious organization can be trusted. Some do not trust either church and choose to disregard them both. One Eritrean man, 'S', says:

> *In my opinion, the churches are like businesses. Someone starts a church and then others complain that he is keeping the money for himself and then they start another church and it's all the same. It's a business. You don't know if someone is a pastor even. They say they are, but you cannot prove it either way.*

COLLECTIVE HOPELESSNESS

According to an oldcomer Eritrean man, 'S', who arrived to Israel in the mid 1990s, Eritreans in Israel do not have the energy to promote or advocate for political change in Israel regarding their status, let alone try to affect political change in Eritrea. Concerning community organizing, 'S' says:

> *We can't do anything. It's not worth anything. In the past we tried many demonstrations, many things, but nothing worked so it's not worth it. We had an organization in the past called Irgun Africa in 2000, but then it didn't work. This was with all Africans, but nothing happened. Then many of them left Israel.*

FEAR OF THE ERITREAN GOVERNMENT

Coming from a country ruled by a harsh dictator also impacts the effectiveness of community groups among the Eritrean population in Israel, especially that of political groups. Many asylum seekers from Eritrea fear protesting in public. They are uncomfortable involving themselves in political activism in Israel because the lives of their family members back home could be endangered. However, for those who do attend protests and demonstrations, there is a growing appreciation that they are experiencing what it means to live in a democracy, where the freedoms of speech and assembly are upheld.

TIME CONSTRAINTS

Similar to the Sudanese community groups, many Eritrean asylum seekers express that time constraints factor largely in their inability to organize and sustain community groups. Without enough time to meet because of the long workdays, arbitrary work schedules, and survival challenges in their daily lives, it is difficult to accomplish their goals. They are too exhausted and busy from working all the time that they cannot realistically prioritize political advocacy. There are also no women's groups in the Eritrean population, which is another result of the lack of time and the challenges to daily survival women face.

LIVING IN THE PERIPHERY

There are no Eritrean community organizations in Eilat, although several thousand Eritreans reside there. At one point in the recent past, there was a conversation between various residents about forming an organization or a committee to advocate for

their needs, but time constraints hindered their ability to invest in the idea. They have also tried to organize demonstrations in front of the municipal government, but have had limited success in motivating people to attend the protests, which they explain is due to time constraints, fear, and hopelessness.

Some of the asylum seekers come from Eilat to join in the protests in Tel Aviv, but they often return home feeling as though their efforts have been futile, as these demonstrations do not yield policy changes in their favor. Still, there are Eritreans in Eilat who are interested in organizing and advocating for their rights in Israel. They mainly worry that they lack CSO assistance, which they feel they need, as there are few allies for the asylum seekers in Eilat.

There are no religious communities in Eilat such that organized religion has come to play less of a central role in the lives of those residing in Eilat, as opposed to in the lives of many of the Eritreans in the Tel Aviv area. For about six months in 2010, while there was one priest located in Eilat, a group of Eritreans gathered to pray with each other weekly. However, when the priest moved to Tel Aviv, the group meetings discontinued. The meetings were held in the only Eritrean restaurant in Eilat on Saturday mornings. Some Eritreans would like to attend church more often, but find that they simply cannot do so because of

their inflexible work schedule, which makes it difficult to travel to Tel Aviv very often.

RELATIONS BETWEEN GROUPS

With incessant policy changes making it increasingly difficult for asylum seekers to live comfortably in Israel, it is inevitable that there will be tensions as people compete for resources. Oldcomers are threatened by newcomers, worrying that they are taking their jobs, ruining their communities' reputations, or causing the government to harden its policy toward the asylum seekers as the numbers of asylum seekers increase. Oldcomer Eritreans, for example, feel that they had integrated well into Israeli society, or at least they went unnoticed. Since larger numbers of Eritreans have entered Israel over the past few years, the oldcomers see the newcomers as a problem. They believe that the newcomers are ruining their reputation by packing many people into small rooms and by drinking and fighting with each other in public.

The example of the visa distribution, as discussed in the first report of 'Surviving in Limbo', caused deep tensions both between different populations of asylum seekers as well as between oldcomers and newcomers. Some of these sentiments, however, did exist for people even before coming to Israel. Many asylum seekers recall how the other asylum seeker populations were on different sides of the wars they fought in or witnessed and they, therefore, continue to harbor resentment toward each other.

The tensions and divisions among different communities are more pronounced in Tel Aviv, where the populations of asylum seekers are the largest and certain resources are perceived to be scarce as a result. These resources often include free access to healthcare, legal assistance, and humanitarian aid from the various CSOs throughout the area, as well as access to jobs: "adequate resources and social infrastructure" are

> *necessary for cohesion and therefore matching resources and services to community growth is key to limit the build up of community tension, particularly in areas of existing deprivation and high competition for resources.*[10]

In Tel Aviv, where there are more CSOs providing aid, asylum seekers are in greater competition for that support. However, because the resources exist but cannot meet the needs of all the asylum seekers, rifts and divisions between communities are more pronounced.

The relations between different asylum seeker populations in peripheral cities like Arad and Eilat are different than those in Tel Aviv. Populations are smaller and there is minimal CSO presence in these cities. Both facts encourage asylum seeker communities and individuals to establish more positive relationships with each other. But this often does not translate into solidarity or unity among the entire asylum seeker population. Unfortunately, the divisions within and between asylum seeker groups seem to impede opportunities for asylum seekers to work together for their common goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS
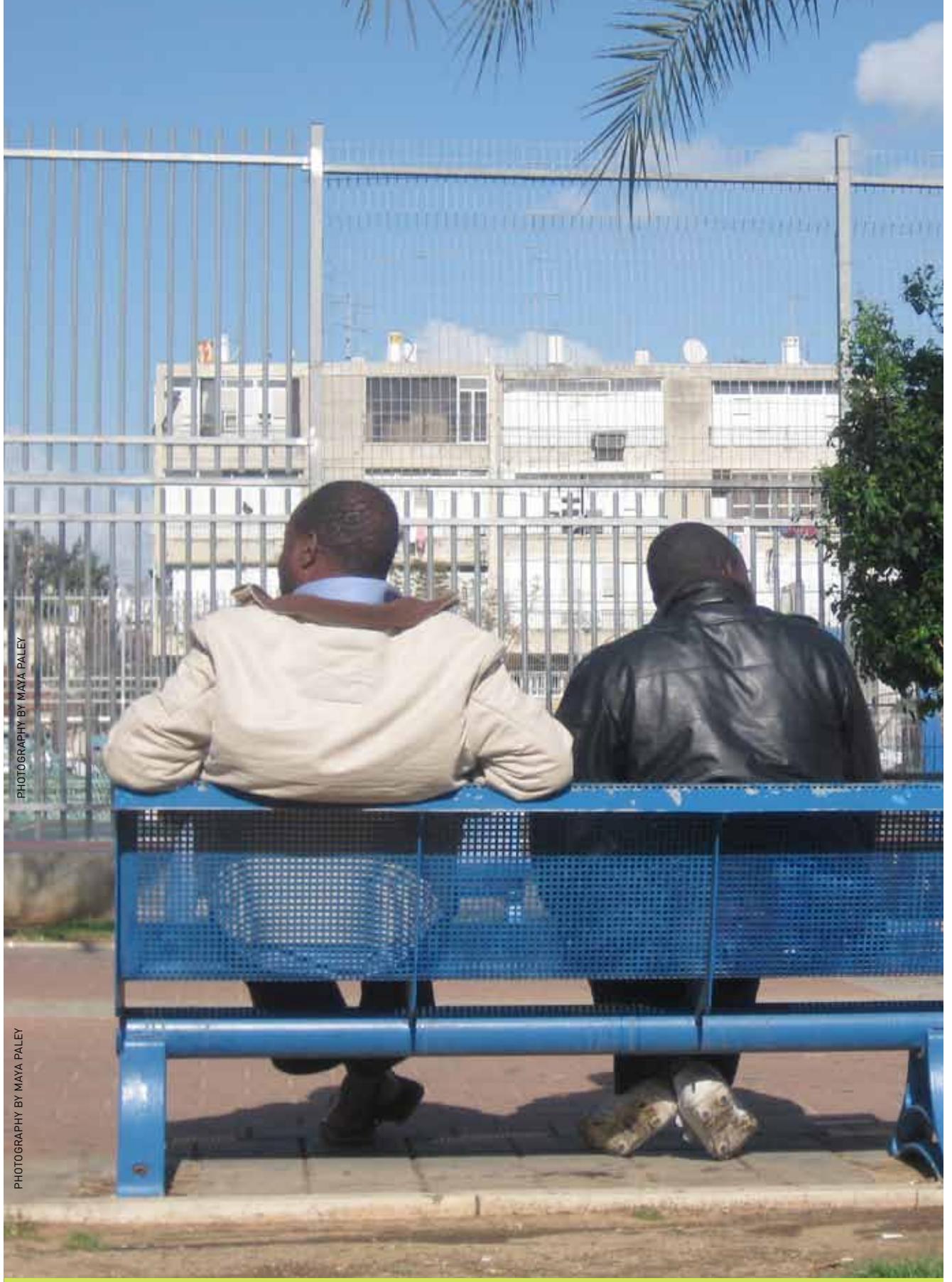
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Many individuals interviewed for this report expressed frustration and doubts about the effectiveness of the CSOs that work with the asylum seekers in Israel. They expressed feeling that their needs were not being met, that the CSOs did not understand their cultural backgrounds, and that they did not feel that their community level mechanisms for aiding themselves were recognized as appropriate or respectable practices.

Therefore, the main challenge is to address the growing gap between the CSOs and the community organizations. The increasing gap between the needs of community organizations and what CSOs can provide stems largely from the fact that CSOs favor working with certain community groups and leaders.

From observations of the CSOs working with asylum seekers in Israel, it seems natural that aid organizations tend to work with the asylum seekers whom they see as either the 'strongest' or the 'weakest' members of the populations. This means that CSOs focus on addressing the needs and concerns of these favored groups while entirely neglecting those of other integral members of the asylum seeking community. In effect, the neglected groups are rendered voiceless since community organizations do not have the infrastructure or organization to be able to run entirely independently. The result is a skewed approach to advocacy that perpetuates a dependence model from which community groups are unable to break free. It is imperative that CSOs be open to adopting a different approach, one that regards community work as something to be accomplished with advice from, and through increased dialogue with, a more diverse array of members and leaders among the range of Eritrean and Sudanese communities in Israel. A starting point to this approach is to commence direct dialogue with women, elders, youth, and community leaders who do not approach the CSOs on their own and who may not speak English or Hebrew.

RECOGNITION

CSOs in Israel are either unfamiliar with, or fail to recognize, the diversity and quantity of community groups among the asylum seeker populations. The current approach excludes a large amount of leaders and groups that are accomplishing important tasks and working hard to improve the lives of their community members. Certain leaders and groups are more accessible to the CSOs, as they approach the CSOs themselves. This leads the CSOs to favor and view their groups as representative of entire asylum seeker populations. It is recommended that CSOs make a concerted effort to become familiar with and sensitive to the myriad of collective representations within all community groups and to refrain from favoring certain groups or leaders over others.

Furthermore, CSOs should be cautious about accepting people who define themselves as 'leaders' of entire communities or populations. CSOs are quick to accept such claims, often basing their receipt of leaders on the person's charisma and their English or Hebrew language skills. This approach leads CSOs to neglect other important community leaders who do not have access to the languages of the CSOs and who are not familiar with the structure of CSOs. This precludes many such leaders from approaching CSOs to claim their leadership positions, despite being considered highly respected decision-makers within their communities.

PARTNERSHIPS

It is also crucial that CSO staff-members and volunteers make a concerted effort to build connections with community groups and leaders in locations that are accessible for the targeted populations. It is common for CSOs to expect the asylum seekers to come to their offices, as most of the services are provided within the office spaces of

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the CSOs. However, this hinders the potential to formulate and strengthen relationships between CSOs and community groups, as it reflects a sentiment that the CSOs are strictly service providers and asylum seekers are patients or victims that come to receive services provided to them. Rather, the approach should ensure that CSOs and community groups work together as equals, and efforts by CSOs to connect with and work with community groups on their terms and in their spaces is one step in this direction.[s]

CSOs have an opportunity to partner with community leaders who have the potential to positively influence many of their community members. However, these partnerships will not occur without making real efforts to step into the field. In other words, CSOs should prioritize community work by establishing staff positions with the resources necessary to visit community members and leaders throughout Israel, dialogue with them about their needs, and work on producing projects and programs together. Women leaders, for example, strongly desire a relationship with CSOs and seek assistance in forming organizational structures and in finding solutions to challenges particular to women asylum seekers in Israel. CSOs must make a real effort to find women leaders and to invest time in partnering with them to create the kinds of programs they want and need. Without seeking out such leaders, CSOs will only have a minimal capacity when working with the asylum seekers, one that is limited to direct humanitarian aid and one that perpetuates a power dynamic that is patriarchal, unequal, and unable to reach its full potential.

The CSOs can provide capacity building and training programs that meet the needs of community groups and organizations after discussing what these needs are with the communities themselves. For example, there are women leaders who are interested in forming women's groups but would like training on how to effectively develop and organize the structure of their groups in order to avoid inefficiency, leadership disputes, and other constraints they have seen other community organizations encounter.

Aside from assisting with organizational or administrative capacity building, CSOs are encouraged to provide trainings to community leaders on specific issues such as methods of approaching and tackling the legal, healthcare, and education systems in Israel. With this information, community leaders will increase their capacity to disseminate the information to their community members, which will reach many more asylum seekers than the CSOs could reach on their own.

CSOS MUST MAKE A REAL EFFORT TO FIND WOMEN LEADERS AND TO INVEST TIME IN PARTNERING WITH THEM TO CREATE THE KINDS OF PROGRAMS THEY WANT AND NEED.

THE CSOS CAN PROVIDE CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS AFTER DISCUSSING WHAT THESE NEEDS ARE WITH THE COMMUNITIES THEMSELVES.

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[s] This is not to say that CSOs never visit the asylum seeker organizations, but evidence suggests that the nature of the visits reflects a power dynamic in which the CSO, as the service provider, holds all the power as opposed to the asylum seeker who, as the service receiver, must accept the organizational systems of the CSOs.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS

Community groups should increase transparency of their leadership to community members in order to mitigate trust issues. This can be accomplished by organizing frequent community meetings, which some community groups already do. The community meetings, however, should include discussions about what the group leaders are accomplishing, including details on the group's finances.

Community leaders should make efforts to express their needs and challenges directly to the CSOs so that the CSOs can work with them to create more effective programs that meet their needs. It is also imperative that community groups explain their reservations concerning advocacy campaigns, such as their fear of protesting in the streets, as it could be harmful to family members in their homes countries. In other words, community groups and CSOs should think of other ways to advocate for change that do not put asylum seekers in perilous positions, but without true communication between the community leaders and CSOs, these types of changes cannot occur.
Also, many community groups are providing important humanitarian assistance to their own community members, as well as conflict resolution support, but the CSOs are often unaware of these accomplishments or of the challenges community leaders face when trying to achieve them. Thus, it is recommended that community leaders increase communications with CSOs about the types of programs they are running and ways in which CSOs can support them. For example, many community groups are in constant search of English, Hebrew, and computer teachers. Rather than providing these services in the CSO offices, where many asylum seekers feel less comfortable than in their community centers, CSOs can assist community centers with finding volunteer teachers who can meet their needs on site.

Community groups and organizations are encouraged to introduce their community leaders, including respected elders and women leaders, to the CSOs. CSOs will typically make efforts to find translators for such meetings as they recognize the importance of learning from the community leaders about how they can partner with them to work toward their common goals.

Lastly, while it is helpful for community organizations to work with the CSOs on advocacy campaigns, it will also be more effective for government agencies to hear from the asylum seekers directly. Going through a third party allows government agencies to avoid direct contact with the people their policies directly affect. It is recommended that community groups and organizations make direct contacts with the Israeli government agencies.

COMMUNITY GROUPS SHOULD INCREASE TRANSPARENCY OF THEIR LEADERSHIP TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN ORDER TO MITIGATE TRUST ISSUES.

COMMUNITY LEADERS SHOULD MAKE EFFORTS TO EXPRESS THEIR NEEDS AND CHALLENGES DIRECTLY TO THE CSOS SO THAT THE CSOS CAN WORK WITH THEM TO CREATE MORE EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS THAT MEET THEIR NEEDS.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT COMMUNITY LEADERS INCREASE COMMUNICATIONS WITH CSOS ABOUT THE TYPES OF PROGRAMS COMMUNITY LEADERS ARE RUNNING AND WAYS IN WHICH CSOS CAN SUPPORT THEM.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND MUNICIPALITIES

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights describes the rights to life, liberty, and personal security, and establishes a basis for political rights and civil liberties, including freedom from slavery, torture, arbitrary arrest and the rights to a fair trial, free speech, free movement, and privacy.[11] Furthermore, Israel's Human Dignity and Liberty Basic Law exists for the sole purpose of ensuring that "all persons are entitled to protection of their life, body, and dignity."[12] The Law maintains that the "fundamental human rights in Israel are founded upon recognition of the value of the human being, the sanctity of human life, and the principle that all persons are free."[13] Thus, it is imperative that government agencies work toward creating a clear, consistent, transparent, and humane policy toward the asylum seekers in Israel—one that ensures that a fair refugee status determination procedure is in place, one that does not criminalize or arbitrarily detain innocent people, and one that ensures that people are treated as human beings.

It is critical that the Israeli government make a concerted effort to increase communications with asylum seeker community leaders who can provide them with insights, information, and a deeper understanding of who the Eritreans and Sudanese living in Israel are and why they have made their way to the country. In addition to continuing to support and interface with CSOs, government agencies are encouraged to also establish direct contacts with community leaders in each city and from each population existent throughout Israel.

Government agencies are encouraged to create a liaison position in each city where asylum seekers reside. The liaison's role would be to create and maintain effective contacts and communications with community leaders and to dialogue with them about the various concerns of the government agencies or municipalities as well as about the needs of the asylum seekers.

Each municipality must also make an effort to increase such communications because many of the challenges faced by all parties are occurring on local levels in addition to those faced due to national policies. For example, Eilat must end its policy of segregating asylum seeker children from the municipal school system and make serious efforts to uphold the universal and Israeli rights to education for children.[t] It is important that municipalities think beyond the short-term. By incorporating asylum seeker community resilience into their work, municipal governments will effectively reduce the burden on the municipality in the long-term, as asylum seekers will depend more on themselves and on their communities than on the local governments. To accomplish such goals, government agencies are encouraged to communicate with local CSOs as a step toward ultimately increasing dialogue with the local asylum seeker communities.

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[t] Immigrant, non-Jewish children in Israel are entitled to receive a free education without subjection to discrimination and based on Israel's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. See the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) and "The Education of Non-Native Language Speaking Children: Israel" by Ruth Levush (Library of Congress, April 2009).

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT GOVERNMENT AGENCIES CREATE A CLEAR, CONSISTENT, TRANSPARENT, AND HUMANE POLICY TOWARD THE ASYLUM SEEKERS IN ISRAEL—ONE THAT ENSURES THAT A FAIR REFUGEE STATUS DETERMINATION PROCEDURE IS IN PLACE, ONE THAT DOES NOT CRIMINALIZE OR ARBITRARILY DETAIN INNOCENT PEOPLE, AND ONE THAT ENSURES THAT PEOPLE ARE TREATED AS HUMAN BEINGS.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ARE ENCOURAGED TO ESTABLISH DIRECT CONTACTS WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS IN EACH CITY AND FROM EACH POPULATION EXISTENT THROUGHOUT ISRAEL.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ARE ENCOURAGED TO CREATE A LIAISON POSITION IN EACH CITY WHERE ASYLUM SEEKERS RESIDE.

[1] The State of Israel. "Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty." [http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic3_eng.htm]

[2] Ibid.

[3] Natan, Dr. Gilad. "National Programme to Meet the Problem of Infiltrators and Asylum Seekers Entering Israel across the Egyptian Border." The Knesset, Research and Information Center. January 2011.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Paz, Yonathan. "Ordered disorder: African asylum seekers in Israel and discursive challenges to an emerging refugee regime." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Policy Development and Evaluation Service. March 2011.

[6] Mitchell, Jenny and Ida Kaplan and Louise Crowe. "Two cultures: one life." Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal. June 2006.

[7] Doron, Esther. "Working with Lebanese Refugees in a Community Resilience Model." Community Development Journal. April 2005.

[8] The Bible Gateway website. New International Version: Isaiah 18. [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+18&version=NIV]

[9] The Olive Branch website. Home Page. [http://www.olivebranchinst.com/Olive_Branch_Institute/Home.html]

[10] Clare Daley, "Exploring Community Connections: Community Cohesion and Refugee Integration at a Local Level." Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal. July 2007.

[11] UN General Assembly. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." December 1948.

[12] The State of Israel. "Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty." [http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic3_eng.htm]

[13] Ibid.

* PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED BY ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS FOR PHOTOS USED IN THIS REPORT.

IN A PLACE WHERE THERE IS NO PERSON TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, STRIVE TO BE THAT PERSON.

RABBI HILLEL