

**"THEY MAKE ME GO HUNGRY
SO I WOULD LEAVE ISRAEL"**

**The human cost of the "Deposit Law" seen through the experiences of
asylum seekers at ASSAF | Situation Report - July 2018**



ארגון סיוע לפליטים ולחוקשי מקלט בישראל

Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel

The human cost of the “Deposit Law” seen through the experiences of asylum seekers at ASSAF

Background

The sole purpose of the “Deposit Law” is to create distress among asylum seekers – to make them go hungry, to weaken them and their families, and to push them to the brink of despair until they “choose” to leave Israel.

Since May 2017 employers of asylum seekers in Israel are obliged to deduct 20% off the workers’ wages and deposit the money into a designated fund. According to the guidelines of the law known as the “Deposit Law” (article 4 of the Anti-infiltration Law), the funds will be returned to the asylum seeker only upon leaving Israel. For over a year, asylum seekers - one of the most marginalized populations in Israel - **must endure this deduction of a fifth of their monthly wages**. This is a community which is excluded from public health and social services and is not entitled to pensions or assistance in housing. Its ability to endure the implications of the Deposit Law is dwindling. **The price is paid predominantly by children, families, and other vulnerable individuals.**

The team of ASSAF - Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel - which stands at the forefront of aid to refugees in Israel, has been witnessing the economic deterioration and the distress brought by the first year of the “Deposit Law”. The trends and numbers in the following pages summarize the harsh situation: **a 35% increase in reports of economic distress; a dramatic rise in the number of asylum seekers seeking assistance with food and diapers; reports of hunger; flats becoming overcrowded as people struggle to pay rent, and families worry about being thrown out to the street; community support networks coming undone as people are no longer able to support the most vulnerable and needy members of the community;** women being forced into prostitution; parents working endless hours to make ends meet, and children left unsupervised as a result; deteriorating physical and mental health and poorer work conditions. All these are direct results of the legislation known as the “Deposit Law”.

In response to a petition by ASSAF and partner organizations to the Israeli High Court of Justice, the state announced that it would do what it had initially refused to do in the legislative process, and create guidelines for exempting “humanitarian cases”.

The regulations that passed on 27 June 2018 adjusted the percentage of the deposit from 20% to 6% to some populations (women, men older than 60, trafficking victims, minors, and those who are able to prove an extreme medical condition). However, they ignore the main providers in the community: men - those with families and those who support others in the community.

The reality detailed here leaves no room for doubt: if the “Deposit Law” is not cancelled, the distress will continue, leading up to a humanitarian crisis.

The trends and the numbers provided in the following pages were assembled from the documentation of cases at ASSAF, daily monitoring of the community in the field, and ongoing information exchanges with other welfare and education organizations that work with asylum seekers.

ASSAF – Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel provides psychosocial aid to asylum seekers and works to advance their rights and status with the state authorities.

The first year of the “Deposit Law” in numbers

Between May 2017 and May 2018, ASSAF received more than 1,300 requests for assistance from asylum seekers – at the Advocacy and Support Center, at ASSAF’s youth club, and in the various support groups and individual counselling that the


organization provides. The following numbers present the effects of the “Deposit Law” on the well-being of asylum seekers, including families, women, children, people with disabilities and torture victims.

More asylum seekers are going hungry

+33%

Increase in the number of people turning to ASSAF for food aid.

Many people and their families eat fewer meals each day and are forced to give up on essential food products. There are also increasing reports of hunger.

.....
 I can (get by) without food. For my children I can (do that). I understand that they want us not to eat so we would leave, but we don't have anywhere to go, and [Almaz's cousin] who had helped us so far - no longer has anything either. And I will do anything to feed my children"


Almaz, single mother of two.

More asylum seekers fear homelessness

+86%

Increase of people turning to ASSAF because they are afraid of homelessness or because they do not have a permanent home.

Many asylum seekers are worried that they would not be able to face the costs of housing. Consequently, more people share living spaces and many families crowd into one room in their flats, bringing in tenants. Such overcrowding has a direct impact on the level of privacy and personal security of all residents, including the children.

.....
 When I come from school, there are many people at home, mum and dad are at work and I need to keep quiet. So I stay out. I do my homework outside the front door."

Bana, daughter of Eritrean asylum seekers.

More asylum seekers are subject to exploitation at work

+52%

Increase of asylum seekers turning to ASSAF due to unemployment or because they fear losing their jobs.

Many people who turned to ASSAF, including those with families, reported that they were fired from their jobs as a result of the "Deposit Law". Many have been forced to accept exploitative employment, including a salary lower than the minimum wage, being denied the health insurance coverage they are entitled to by law, and not receiving a pay slip.

.....

“ I began working without a pay slip [after the Deposit Law came into effect], but then I was fired without an explanation. Now I'm in another place without a pay slip, but sometimes in the morning [the boss] calls to tell me to stay home today, because there is not enough work. I wake up every day not knowing if I will have work. I don't know what's better. At least beforehand I was insured”

Shishai, an Eritrean asylum seeker.

Asylum seekers are sicker and their mental state is more fragile

+209%

17% more people turn to ASSAF with physical health problems. There is an increase of 209% in people coming to ASSAF because of mental health issues.

Since the law was enacted, more asylum seekers are employed without receiving the legally required health insurance, which leads to a deterioration in health and well-being. In addition, there is a noticeable rise in expressions of despair, helplessness and anxiety, and feelings of insecurity and lack of control over one's life. There is a 25% increase in people turning to ASSAF for mental support. The pressure, economic distress and anxiety affect family life, including in the form of 67% increase in reports of domestic violence.

.....

“ I'm at work all the time. I barely see my children. They are still asleep when I dress them up [in the morning] and already asleep when I bring them home from kindergarten. They are like puppets on a string. I've stopped paying for their health insurance. At night I constantly think of what my children may think of me”

Ruta, a single mother of two children.

**Jacob and
Tzaga**



Jacob and Tzaga are a married couple, from Eritrea and victims of torture in the Sinai Peninsula. They have two children aged two and four. The mother, Tzaga, suffers from acute and chronic back pain that prevents her from working. Since she does not work, she has no medical insurance and therefore cannot get the medical treatment she needs. She copes with mental health issues and struggles to talk about her experiences in Sinai. The father, Jacob, is the family's only breadwinner; he takes care of both children and the household almost entirely on his own, and he has recently started showing signs of depression. Since the "Deposit Law", the family's income has been cut by a fifth. Jacob will not be exempt from deposit payments under the new regulations.

The effects of the Deposit Law: key trends

▶ **Children getting less nutrition**

Since the enforcement of the Deposit Law, families of asylum seekers are forced to reduce their spending on their children. There is a rise in the number of families asking for assistance in baby food, diapers, and other essential equipment for babies. Many children express hunger when they arrive at school and kindergarten.

▶ **Children are less safe**

Many families have started to consider moving their children from regular private kindergartens to unsupervised ones, often referred to as “babysitters” (sometimes also called “children warehouses”), which cost less. Conditions in the babysitters are poor and often dangerous – with six reported cases of deaths in recent years. The children’s parents, working long hours to make up at least for some of what is taken from them under the Deposit Law, often have to leave children in “children warehouses”, or alone at home. Without parental supervision and with their home overcrowded, many children end up roaming the streets for many hours every day. In addition, during the past year many children were exposed to domestic violence and to parents who struggle to cope under mental pressure and anxiety.

▶ **Children’s health is deteriorating**

Many families report that they have stopped, or thinking of stopping, the payment towards their children’s health insurance, including families with children with special needs. In other cases, parents have said that they are unable to take their children to treatments because they fear missing work.

▶ **Community support network crushed**

In the absence of support from state authorities, the refugee community has developed a network of mutual support. Many survive only thanks to the community support they receive. The Deposit payments hurt the strong asylum seekers, who are mostly single, and support the vulnerable groups in the community. In the past year there has been a rise in the number of asylum seekers who report that they can no longer support others.



العمل ናይስራት WORK

مطلب
العالمين

WORKERS RIGHTS
From the right to

የሥራ መብት

Tigist and Allem



Tigist and Allem are asylum seekers from Eritrea and parents to three children. One of their children suffers from kidney failure and is hospitalized. Tigist spends most of her time by his side. In recent years the couple has been supporting Emanuel, a victim of the torture camps in the Sinai, whom they met several years ago, when he was in a very bad physical and mental state. The family has welcomed Emanuel into its home and takes care of all his needs. Allem is the main provider, and the family is struggling to make the deposit payments, but refuses to abandon Emmanuel. The new regulations will not improve the condition of the family.



WHEN YOU GET A JOB:

- 1 Write down all the details you can get from the employer
- 2 Find AND tell name of employer
- 3 Address
- 4 Name of the company
- 5 Phone number of employer
- 6 Working hours

A month in the life of a family of asylum seekers

Dawit and Salam are a married couple with a baby and an infant child. Dawit works full time washing dishes in a restaurant and Salam works as a part time cleaner. The children are in an unsupervised kindergarten ("children warehouse") during the day.

Dawit		Salam	
Salary	6,200 NIS	Salary	2,500 NIS
Tax and National Insurance*	620 NIS	Tax and national insurance*	250 NIS
Deposit payments	1,240 NIS	Deposit payments	500 NIS
Health insurance via employer	124 NIS	Health insurance via employer	80 NIS
Income	4,216 NIS	Income	1,670 NIS
Joint income: 5,886 NIS			

+35%

Increase in reports of economic hardship among asylum seekers.

Expenses

Rent	3,000 NIS
Daycare for two children	1,100 NIS
Bills (municipal tax, water, electricity, gas)	400 NIS
Clothing	200 NIS ONLY 100 NIS
Baby food, diapers	400 NIS ONLY 300 NIS
Other expenses (phone, travel, hygiene and cleaning materials)	300 NIS ONLY 200 NIS
Food	800 NIS
Health insurance for children	240 NIS STOPPED PAYING
Total:	6,440 NIS

*Dawit and Salam pay 10% Income Tax. Asylum Seekers are not eligible for tax relief and pay income tax on their entire salary

ארגון סיוע לפליטים ולמבקשי מקלט בישראל
Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel



25 Golomb St, Tel Aviv 6617141

Tel. 972 72 251 3837

Fax. 972 72 251 3838

info@assaf.org.il

www.assaf.org.il

[f@assaf.org.il](https://www.facebook.com/assaf.org.il)