

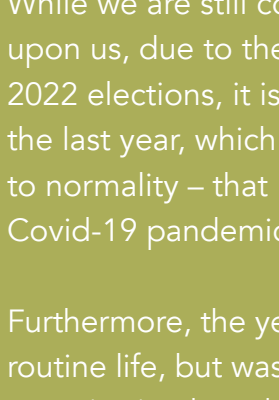
ASSAF Activity Report 2022

Photographer: Dani Shein in "Rising Palm of the project" "Photo Voice", directed by Dina Shinar-Ramot and Rina Sotnik

"Perhaps only migrating birds – suspended between heavens and earth – know this suffering of having two homelands"

Leah Goldberg

Dear friends, supporters and colleagues,



I am proud to share with you this summary of ASSAF's main activities and accomplishments during the year 2022.

In 2022 ASSAF celebrated 15 years of activity. During these years, our organization has always been on the forefront of the struggle for supporting the refugee community in Israel. Since its establishment, ASSAF has labored for the recognition of refugees' rights and needs, emphasizing their right to live in dignity, while also providing them with direct support and granting them with much needed psychosocial services. In these complicated times, while being aware of the latest election results and the country's ongoing struggle for democratic values and human rights, our organization continues, alongside the members of the community, to raise its voice and fight for the rights of refugees in Israel.

While we are still coping with the new reality that was brought upon us, due to the change of governments in the November 2022 elections, it is worthwhile to stop for a moment and review the last year, which was characterized mostly by the return to normality – that is, after two years of struggling with the Covid-19 pandemic and the long quarantines.

Furthermore, the year 2022 was not only defined as a return to routine life, but was also filled with innovation and energy: Our organization launched new therapeutic groups, designated for strengthening resilience among the participants; we have created a safe space for practicing art therapy; we have expanded the activities of the youth club, in addition to creating designated activities only for girls; we have expanded our selection of lectures to the general public, while also expanding our services of making information more accessible to the community; we have joined a coalition of civil society organizations, promoting the issue of food security; and much more.

The 36th government, headed by Lapid and Bennett, opened up new opportunities for us in the year 2022, including activities in the public arena. ASSAF has strived – by itself and alongside partner organizations – to fulfill every opportunity, be it a small or a big one, to promote the rights of refugees in Israel and to expand the few services provided to them today. The

"theory of change" that guides our activities has proved itself once again: the problems and challenges which have surfaced from "the field", arriving mostly through the psychosocial department, which provides direct assistance to the refugees, were "translated" into public actions – such as public demands from government agencies for rapid changes concerning crucial issues; Moreover, our "theory of change" was also applied in a reversed way – namely, decisions made and implemented by government agencies were examined and evaluated in real life by our staff, who were routinely providing psychosocial services to the refugee community.

Since the beginning of the year, we have been watching with concern the war images coming from Ukraine, followed immediately by the arrival of war refugees to Israel, most of whom are women and children who have left their family members behind. Our staff at ASSAF, who were already well acquainted with Israel's history regarding the treatment of refugees – mostly that of neglect and of rights deprivation – understand the urgent need for large preparations, leading to our immediate public work in the Knesset and with different government agencies, all in order to provide the new refugees from Ukraine with a basic framework of rights and services.

Today, as the destructive agendas of the new government are unraveling in front of our eyes, we are required to rapidly prepare ourselves for the new aggressive steps, which will be directed against the refugee community in Israel. These steps will include, according to coalition agreements, deportation of refugees, reenactment of the "Deposit Fund" law, and most concerning – the enactment of a Basic Law regarding immigration, which is meant to provide the government with a free hand in abusing the refugees, while also crushing any rulings made by the Israeli Supreme Court, that were designed to protect the few basic rights granted to the refugees.

ASSAF is determined to fight, with your support, against any offensive government initiative, while also continuing to provide services and direct support to the refugee community. We are also resolute to find and use any opening which will enable us to expand the few rights and services that are granted today to the community.

Tali Ehrenthal, MSW
Executive Director of ASSAF
March 2023

Activity and key achievements for 2022

January Many members of the refugee community are suffering from severe poverty and food insecurity. Therefore, our organization is also obliged to provide them with humanitarian aid. During the month of January, our staff handed out 100 winter packages as well as many bundles of dried food, donated by the "Latet" organization. The winter packages consisted of blankets, hot water bottles, umbrellas, and more. The community members who received the packages were overjoyed and filled with gratitude.

January During the month of January, we launched a new women's support group for torture survivors. The group consisted of 12 women, who participated in 15 meetings. During these meetings, the women acquired different psychological tools, which could help them cope with their post-traumatic symptoms. The meeting in which the issue of human rights was discussed was most significant. During this meeting, the women were provided with important information concerning their rights, while the discussion also focused upon the activities of human rights organizations and their unique role in democratic societies.

January During the month of January, ASSAF and Physicians for Human Rights called upon the Israeli Minister of Social Services and the Israeli Minister of Health, pleading with them to find a quick solution to the obstacles facing homeless refugees and refugees with disabilities, most of whom are in need of "out of home" placement. In our call, we also emphasized the importance of finding a solution to the absence of health insurance among this group of refugees, and the urgent need to expand our services to them, so that they could keep on living among their own community.

February Led by Attorney Michal Pomerantz, and alongside HIAS and three individual refugees, ASSAF sent a petition concerning the use of electric bicycles. Since refugees do not have an Israeli identity card, they are prohibited from taking a theory test and acquiring a driving license. Our petition called upon the Ministry of Transport to lift its restrictions and allow refugees to take the test and acquire a driving license.

February During this month, we submitted our opinion regarding a new bill, which was supposed to rearrange the field of social services that are designated for people with disabilities. We have demanded from the Israeli Ministry of Welfare to also include in their legislation refugees who are coping with a disability, and to allow them access to social services, as any other Israeli citizen in their situation.

March Following the arrival of Ukrainian refugees to Israel, we have called upon the Ministry of Welfare to grant them basic rights and social services, while also calling upon the Ministry of Education to enroll refugee children into the education system. Moreover, during a special committee discussion on the issue in the Knesset, we have made it clear that its services provided by special centers, dedicated specifically for these people due to the danger they face in their own country, must also include minimal rights and services.

April The politician Mossi Raz ("Mossie") visited ASSAF's offices with his staff. We accompanied them later on a tour through the neighborhood of Neve Sha'an and ASSAF's youth club. This meeting was designed to raise awareness and for making part of the public agenda the dilemmas and challenges facing the youth and adolescents from the refugee community, including the obstacles they face regarding academic studies, or acquiring a profession, and so on.

April This month we launched a women's group, focusing on the issue of safe sexuality. The group was launched with the collaboration of "Israel AIDS Task Force" and included 8 women. The topics brought up during the meetings included sexual violence and abusive relationships. The women who participated in the group used its safe space for discussing the issues which were concerning them. They also found the group to be a place where they could listen to other women with similar experience and enrich themselves with new information.

May ASSAF's Youth Club launched a new group dedicated to "personal responsibility and commitment", the purpose of which is to promote leadership among the young boys and girls. The group includes 11 participants, who have dedicated themselves to 60 hours of volunteering for the community. During group meetings the participants learn about forming a feeling of belonging and about social consciousness and awareness, while also understanding the importance of contributing to the community and the environment. As part of their activities, the group cleaned streets in the neighborhood of Neve Sha'an, came in touch with homeless people and distributed food to people in distress.

June During this month, we launched a new group for 14 single mothers. The women in the group participated in 15 emotional meetings, where they could speak and learn about different issues – such as, how to acquire tools for the development of resilience, how to acknowledge rights as their strength and how to accept the pain that accompanies life. The women in the group formed meaningful relationships among themselves, while also creating a safe space, where, for the first time, it was they – not their children or the day-to-day hardships – who were in the limelight.

July For the first time our staff conducted a "Facebook Live" conversation with refugees in Israel, concerning workers' rights. Representatives from the Ministry of Economy presented their rights as workers to the participants. The participants used this forum to ask relevant questions and learn about their rights. The live video was watched in real-time by almost a thousand people, when at any given moment the maximum number of viewers was seventy-five.

July This month ASSAF collaborated with the PHOTO VOICE organization, launching a special photographic course. The new course was based on the PHOTO VOICE method, which strives to "help different communities make their voice heard, to let their members protest and tell their stories through the medium of photography". The course included eight participants, who learned the language of photography, experimented with practical photography in their daily life, and presented their works in the concluding photo exhibition.

July Our youth club continued and expanded its activity during the summer vacation, granting the young boys and girls a safe space in which they were able to spend time during school. During this month, our youth club visited the Alpaca Farm at Mitzpe Ramon. Meeting the wild animals was an exhilarating experience for the teenagers. They also participated in different workshops, cooked meals together, and traveled around the country. Being outdoors in nature created an opportunity for them to cope with different challenges, thus also experimenting with issues relating to developing their self-esteem and strengthening their bonds.

August S, a female refugee coping with a violent relationship, was accompanied at ASSAF by a social worker. The treatment she received at our organization increased her sense of security and also strengthened her capacity to cope with reality. Since the year 2020, female refugees victims of domestic violence are entitled to services provided by special centers, dedicated specifically for this. These centers are legally placed under the authority of the different local governments. However, our examination revealed that only a few local governments actually made their services accessible to the refugees. Our organization will continue its effort to achieve a change in the matter.

September During this month, the Israeli court held a hearing concerning a petition filed by ASSAF alongside other organizations and a few refugees. This petition, led by the staff of "Kav LaOved" organization, called for the abolition of a new government policy, conceived by the Minister of Interior, that limited the employment of refugees in seventeen main cities in Israel to only four branches of employment. This new policy is expected to severely harm the refugees' livelihood and increase the risk of them becoming victims of abusive employment. Moreover, the new policy is also expected to harm employers' profits and the Israeli society as a whole.

September At the beginning of the new school year, ASSAF participated in a demonstration at Habima Square. This event was organized by parents leading the fight for the abolishment of the segregation policy in the Tel-Aviv education system – a policy aimed at separating the children of refugees from those of Israeli citizens. The demonstration at Habima Square, which enjoyed media coverage, was very meaningful and important, emphasizing the firm solidarity of Israeli parents with those from the refugee community.

September A, had an accident that left him disabled and made it difficult for him to find work. He was forced to take loans from his friends in order to survive. Following long term treatment by a social worker at ASSAF, A was integrated into a vocational rehabilitation program, which enabled him to acquire new skills and to reconstruct his status in the labor market – and, according to him, "to literally come back to life".

October The Minister of Health ranked ASSAF second among Israeli civil institutions, dedicated to the promotion of civil and human rights: "You have my deepest appreciation for your remarkable work for the benefit of a vulnerable population, whose members might have been left voiceless, were it not for your help [...] the support you provide the refugees is an example of bridging over both cultural gaps and language barriers, thus focusing, above all, on the individual's basic needs and rights"

October During this month we launched a new course – "Knowledge from Experience" – designed for post-traumatic refugees, most of whom are torture survivors and victims of human-trafficking. The course, which was provided in collaboration with "Yozma Denech Halev" organization, included 8 refugees. The course's main goal was to empower its participants emotionally while also qualifying them, after undergoing rehabilitative treatment, to be able to provide psychological assistance to other members in their community. Hopefully, these refugees could reduce any stigmas embedded in their community about mental disorders and mental recovery.

October During this month, ASSAF has also hosted Professor Roni Strier, Chairman of the National Council for Food Security, with additional council members. We presented our organization's work and the current situation of the refugees in Israel, focusing mainly on the alarming data concerning food insecurity among them. We accompanied Professor Strier on a tour in the neighborhood of Neve Sha'an, during which he expressed his commitment to promote our cause.

November The elections' results were not what we had hoped for in terms of the commitment to promote refugees' rights. Therefore, we began to prepare ourselves for the new political reality. We followed all the political movements designed to form the new government; we mapped all the members of the new Knesset and tried to locate any opportunities for change; we turned to our supporters and clearly declared that "there is no democracy without respect for human rights, and there is no respect for human rights without also respect for refugees' rights".

November S, a single mother to three children contacted us after her landlord cut off the electricity in her apartment and tried to evict her and her children. With the help of a lawyer, who provided his legal services pro bono, we assisted S to reach a settlement with her landlord outside of court. Our organization helped with the payments of the rent and provided S and her children humanitarian aid, such as food and clothing.

December Our staff was invited to the "Fortitude Center" in Bat Yam, for a meeting with members of the Congolese community. We reviewed the status of the Congolese refugees' rights in Israel, following the removal of their group protection of non-'refoulement, which they had been enjoying for many years. We made sure that the courses of action for those at risk of deportation are clearly known to them. Thirty-four Congolese refugees participated in the meeting.

December Among our many duties, the daily activities and the big events surrounding all of us, we have still found a moment for gathering – that is, a face-to-face meeting with the members of our community, here at ASSAF – staff members, volunteers and donors. During the meeting, toasts were raised, wishes were delivered and modest gifts were exchanged. Later on, everybody enjoyed the delicacies that we had all brought for the event. The meeting was very moving and joyful.

The Year 2022 in Numbers

- 7,568** Volunteer hours for the refugees' cause
- 85** Volunteers
- 103** Adolescents who frequented our youth club
- 1,915** Refugees accompanied by our staff
- 112** Single-parent families treated at ASSAF
- 415** Torture survivors and their family members treated at ASSAF
- 134** Aid packages for babies were distributed
- 221** People with disabilities and chronic diseases who received support
- 228** People with medical needs who received help
- 151,648 NIS** Value of direct financial support provided
- 101,315 NIS** Value of dry food distributed
- 3,730** Actions of advocacy and applying of rights
- 252,964 NIS** Value of humanitarian aid provided
- 6** Partnerships in legal petitions
- 905** People attending lectures
- 96** Days of public reception
- 24** Position papers and reports published
- 37** Publications in the media
- 81** People participating in the groups
- 9** Support/organized groups created
- 100** Meetings with policy makers
- 7** Videos containing information for the refugees
- 18,191** Video views containing information for the refugees
- 20,887** Facebook followers
- 8,392** Followers on Tigrinya Facebook page for refugees

The Team and Board Members

ASSAF's Team – 2022

- Tali Ehrenthal, Social Worker, Executive Director of ASSAF
- Adi Drori-Avraham/Orly Levinson-Sela, Lawyer, Head of Public Advocacy
- Miriam Meyer, Psychosocial Resource Director
- Emma Eytan/ Mika Foush, Department Development Director
- Daniela Fields, Revital Biadgo, Volunteer Manager
- Orly Levinson-Sela, Lawyer/ Hadar Avial, Public Advocacy Director
- Dr. Shani Bar-Tuvia, Policy Advancer
- Tomer Shore/Gilad Palombo, New-Media Coordinator
- Tal Harari, Community Engagement and Resource Development Manager
- Mitch Shechter, Social Worker/Shay Laadan, Social Worker, Coordinator of Support Program for Torture Survivors
- Avigail Pinto, Social Worker, Coordinator of Support Program for Vulnerable Refugees
- Marina Shaarbani, Psychologist/Yudit Ilany, Social Worker, Coordinator of Support Project for People with Disabilities
- Nitsan Feldstein, Youth Manager
- Eli Amon/ Shira Marom, Youth Club Coordinator
- Yeel Federman/ Talia Hartman, Co-director of Advocacy and Support Center – Follow Up
- Solomon Gebreyohan/ Hadara Zera, Co-director of Advocacy and Support Center, Translator and Community Mediator
- Aster Tesfamariam, Translator and Community Mediator
- Eden Nuguse, Translator and Community Mediator
- Mehari Damon, Translator and Community Mediator
- Havet Solomon, Translator and Community Mediator
- Mari Beza/ Hila Doudevani, Office Manager
- Yeel Karen, Accountant
- Nur Shudick/Daniel Landau/ Lia Dreyfus, National Service Volunteer
- DM - Media, Strategy, PR
- Volunteers 85



ASSAF's Team – 2022

- MSW **Roee Metzger/ Adv. Orit Ronen**, Chairwoman
- Adv. **Lea Miller-Forshtat**
- Jordan Rosenberg**
- Tali Kaminer**
- Prof. Jerome Bourdon**
- Adv. **Osnat Cohen Lipshitz**

ASSAF wishes to express its appreciation to all its partners – organizations, foundations and different private donors – for all their donations and support.

Arkin Family Foundation	Belsize Square Synagogue	The Blue Thread	Ido Kook, In Memory Of Daphna Lot, Z"l
Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund (JHF)	Protestantse Kerk	International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims	New Israel Fund (NIF)
Porticus-Stiftung Auxilium	The Rayne Foundation	Sam & Bella Sebba Charitable Trust	Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality
The Canadian Embassy	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Israel (UNHCR)	United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR-UNVCT)	Signing Anew
The Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation	MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger	Azrieli Foundation	The Israeli Council for Volunteering

And other private donors

Support ASSAF

ASSAF is a nonprofit organization, supported by generous donations from other organizations, foundations and private donors. We invite you to take part in our effort, donate ASSAF and support the refugees and asylum seekers in Israel.

Details about the different ways to donate ASSAF are to be found at our website.

- DONATE TO ASSAF**
A donation to ASSAF is recognized as an expenditure for tax purposes, according to section 40A.
- VOLUNTEERING**
- "IGUL LETOVAT ASSAF"**
(round up your credit card purchases to the nearest shekel) and donate the difference to ASSAF.
- ASSAF'S WEBSITE**

Report design: anitrueten.com

Aster Nuguse, Community Mediator

ASSAF holds a "Midot Seal of Effectiveness"