

"A Matter of Life or Death"

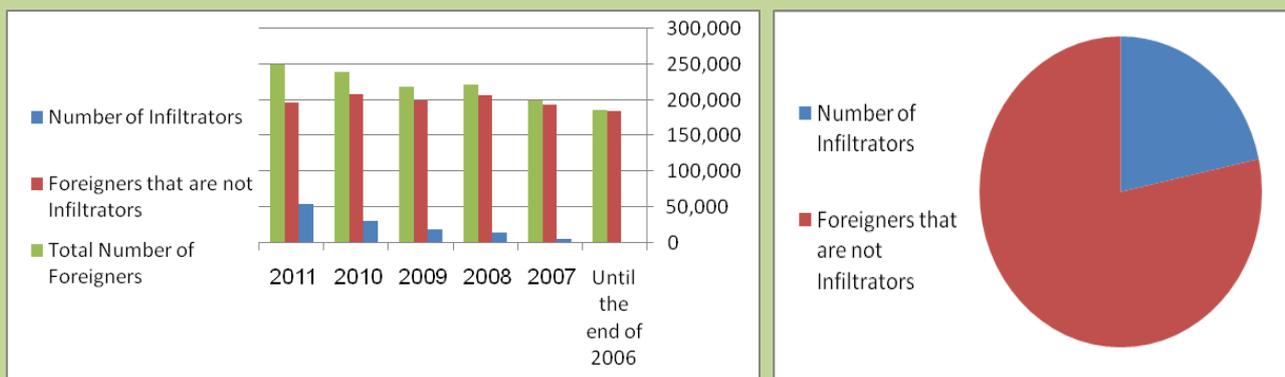
Description of the Current Refugee Situation in Israel:

- Since 2007, there has been a steady increase in the number of asylum-seekers arriving in Israel.
- Most of these asylum-seekers gain access into Israel via the Egyptian border.
- In the past 5 years, according to various reports, about 55,000 "infiltrators" have entered Israel, among them labor migrants alongside asylum-seekers.
- Israel is one of the countries that has seen the most immigration of asylum-seekers as a percentage of the pre-existing population over the last few years.

In addition:

- Israel is a country that was founded by and for refugees from genocide.
- Israel was one of the leaders in writing the protocols of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees because of the lessons learned before and during the Holocaust.
- Since Israel signed onto the convention, no legislation has been passed in Israel to define the way a person can receive the status of a refugee, along with the associated rights and obligations.
- Israel has granted refugee status to at least 200 people since the establishment of the State. Most of them received the status on a temporary basis and left Israel after a certain number of years.
- For the sake of comparison, in order for Israel to reach 5th or 6th place in the world (in comparison to the size of the population and purchasing power), Israel would need to grant asylum and refugee status to approximately 1,750 amnesty-seekers per year.
- Israel also does not do her part in contributing to refugee camps outside of Israel (21st place relative to the size of the economy). This is a place where Israel could have partially fulfilled her obligation to save the lives of refugees whose lives are at risk.

Number of asylum-seekers out of total foreigners in Israel



Year of Entry	Until the end of 2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of Infiltrators	1,700	6,075	14,773	19,600	31,766	54,000
Foreigners that are not Infiltrators	184,300	193,925	207,227	199,400	208,234	196,000
Total Number of Foreigners	186,000	200,000	222,000	219,000	240,000	250,000

**The "infiltrators" are not a majority of the foreigners in Israel!
 Conflating these two phenomena blurs the unique nature of this problem and the moral demand to save people fleeing for their lives.
 Even among the asylum-seekers, not all are eligible for protection as refugees.**

“A Matter of Life or Death” – Recommended policy for the State of Israel relating to refugees and asylum-seekers in Israel

Guiding Principles:

1. Preserving the State of Israel as a both Jewish and democratic country.
2. Saving refugees from violence who are fleeing for their lives in ways that do not harm principle #1.
3. The Israeli government taking responsibility for asylum-seekers and refugees.

Principles of the Proposal:

1. Close the border between Israel and Egypt – create a physical border to prevent illegal immigration, smuggling, and terrorist activity:

The fence between Israel and Egypt has not yet been completed. Illegal border-crossing is relatively easy and harms the sovereignty of Israel because she does not have the ability to decide or regulate who enters her territory according to policy and subject to law. The number entering and their refugee situation causes frequent changes in the behavior of the State of Israel regarding asylum-seekers and refugees. Herein lays the difficulty in creating policy from a wide perspective of moral and practical factors.

The Israel-Egypt border is 230 km long and has three border crossings. The border sees vast smuggling operations of drugs, weapons, migrant laborers, and human trade (primarily of women for the purpose of prostitution). Despite the considerable efforts of the government and its forces, the border has been breached in certain places.

The completion of the physical barrier will dramatically decrease the infiltration into Israel. Israel, as a sovereign country, must exert control over her borders.

2. Determine an annual quota for absorption and rehabilitation for refugees from genocide and those fleeing for their lives:

In order to preserve the character of the State of Israel while providing an appropriate solution for the refugees who will be accepted, an annual quota needs to be determined for absorption and rehabilitation. Determining such a quota is an accepted policy in many developed countries. Israel has a moral responsibility to save refugees, within a scope that it can handle and without putting its existence as a State in danger. As a democratic and developed country bordering Africa, we need to determine a reasonable absorption quota, as put in place in other countries. In an attempt to determine the appropriate quota, the sociological and Jewish-democratic character of the state needs to be taken into account. Due the current limited amount of government resources, Israel cannot be readily compared to economies of similar size.

We recommend an annual quota of 1,750 refugees to be absorbed into Israel. This number would place Israel rather high on the list of Western countries that accept refugees, in terms of both its size and economic capacity.

3. Regulation of refugee status, rights, and obligations:

A. Shortening the selection period to a maximum of 60 days, and quick action to regulate refugee's status or organize their deportation. The selection will clarify which asylum-seekers are indeed facing threats upon their lives and will decide who is entitled to protection. Whoever is entitled to protection will be treated by law as a refugee. Whoever is not entitled to protection will be deported or treated according to the Law of Entry into Israel.

B. If a person qualifies for refugee status and enters under the quota, s/he will receive refugee status.

C. A person who receives refugee status will be eligible for all the rights and obligations according to international law.

D. Refugee status is a temporary status until the danger to the refugee's life in his/her home country has passed.

4. Integrated solution for refugees currently located in Israel:

A. With the closing of the border on the one hand and determining the annual quota, and a clarification of refugee status on the other, it will be possible to devise appropriate solutions for the high number of refugees already in Israel.

B. Reaching an international agreement with other developed countries to accept within their quota appropriate refugees and asylum-seekers currently located in Israel, as well as reaching an agreement with a third country in Africa to accept refugees under its authority or to refugee camps within its territory in exchange for monetary support for the refugee camps.

C. Absorption of some of the refugees within a quota for a few years, while freezing absorption of new refugees for those same years.

D. Determining national policy to enforce the Law of Entry into Israel, labor laws, and planning and building laws, thereby reducing the incentive for labor migration, while assisting disadvantaged populations in general and better distributing the refugees throughout different parts of the country.