

## FAQs: asylum seekers in Israel

### 1. What is the difference between migrant, asylum seeker and refugee?

According to the United Nations, refugees ‘are persons fleeing armed conflict or persecution.’ Migrants choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons. An asylum seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed.

### 2. How many African migrants and asylum seekers are there in Israel?

There are 38,000 African migrants and asylum seekers in Israel.

### 3. Where are they from?

The majority are Eritrean, fleeing dictatorship and a compulsory military service that can last for 40 years. Many others are from Sudan, where those who are seeking asylum in Israel would otherwise face genocide.

### 4. How did the asylum seekers arrive in Israel?

They entered through the Sinai desert between 2005 and 2012.

### 5. How many asylum seekers have had their applications accepted?

So far, Israel has recognized refugee status for one Sudanese and 10 Eritrean asylum seekers (out of the 38,000 currently in Israel.) About 200 Sudanese in Israel received an A5 humanitarian visa, which is a partial recognition of refugee status and enables them to work legally in Israel.

### 6. What is the status of the asylum seekers in Israel?

The majority of the asylum seekers and migrants receive temporary visas every few months, which they must renew in person at the Interior Ministry in Bnei Brak near Tel Aviv.

### 7. Can asylum seekers work in Israel?

Technically, those temporary visas do not allow asylum seekers to work, though the government has announced they will not enforce the work permits issue. Companies who hire asylum seekers are required to deduct 20% of the paycheck after taxes to put into a “deposit fund.” This deposit fund is only accessible for withdrawal at Ben Gurion airport after the asylum seeker agrees to leave to a third-party country.

### 8. What is Holot?

Holot is a detention centre in the Negev Desert for illegal migrants. The centre requires residents to check in between 10 p.m. and 8 a.m.; outside these hours they

are free to go wherever they wish. Generally, asylum seekers are sent to Holot for a year, after which they are released and can continue their lives.

### 9. Could Israel absorb the asylum seekers?

Some people, including some asylum seekers, are advocating for Israel to implement a policy of dispersal. This would assign asylum seekers to certain geographic areas to relieve the burden on south Tel Aviv, where the vast majority currently reside. In order for a dispersal policy to be effective in Israel, the government would need to allow refugees work permits and the ability to get driver's licenses. There are also concerns that deporting nearly 40,000 people who fill manual labour positions in Israel will leave the country with a labour deficit.

Information sourced from:

[The Times of Israel - 10 key questions about Israel's African Asylum seeker Controversy](#)

[The Telegraph - What is the difference between a refugee, a migrant and an asylum seeker?](#)