



**HIAS**

Welcome the stranger.  
Protect the refugee.

2022-2023 Overview  
**HIAS ISRAEL**

# HIAS Israel

## Overview 2022-2023



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Protect the refugee.**

**HIAS ISRAEL 2022**

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## Our History

From our beginnings in the 1880s in a storefront on the Lower East Side of Manhattan providing food and shelter to Jews fleeing antisemitism in Eastern Europe, to our work nearly 140 years later providing social, emotional, legal, and advocacy support to those in need around the world, HIAS has served as a pivotal force for displaced people for generations. Indeed, HIAS began its work even before the world had a legal concept of a “refugee.”

Having helped more than 4.5 million refugees and immigrants escape persecution, HIAS is uniquely qualified to address the modern refugee situation, which has become a global humanitarian crisis. After over 100 years of serving Jews fleeing persecution around the globe, HIAS, starting in the 2000s, expanded its work in the U.S. to include assistance to non-Jewish refugees devastated by the aftermath of conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Hungary, Iran, Morocco, Poland, Romania, Tunisia, Vietnam, and the successor states to the former Soviet Union.

HIAS began a new chapter in 2002 when it established operations in Kenya to provide protection to refugees from African countries plagued by conflict, to advocate on their behalf, and to resettle the most vulnerable. Soon after, we began work in Latin America, serving people displaced by conflict in several countries. Currently HIAS works in 16 countries including Aruba, Austria, Belgium, Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Greece, Guyana, Israel, Kenya, Mexico, Panama, Peru, United States, and Venezuela. As the only global Jewish organization whose mission is to assist refugees wherever they are, HIAS continues to protect, empower, and resettle refugees of all faiths and ethnicities from around the world.



## Vision, Mission, and Values

### Vision

HIAS stands for a world in which refugees find welcome, safety, and opportunity.

### Mission

Drawing on our Jewish values and history, HIAS provides vital services to refugees and asylum seekers around the world and advocates for their fundamental rights so they can rebuild their lives.

### Values

Impassioned by our mission, we bring the lessons of HIAS' history and Jewish ethics and experience to our commitment to serve refugees and other displaced persons of concern around the world through the following values:

#### Welcome • Acogimiento • Hospitalité • הכנסת אורחים (Hachnasat Orchim)

We **Welcome** the Stranger

#### Justice • Justicia • Justice • צדק (Tzedek)

We Pursue **Justice**

#### Empathy • Empatía • Empathie • חסד (Chesed)

We Approach our Clients with **Empathy**

#### Partnership • Compañerismo • Coopération • חברותא (Chevruta)

We Believe in Changing the World through **Partnership**

#### Courage • Coraje • Courage • אומץ (Ometz)

We Act with **Courage** to Build a Better World

#### Resilience • Resiliencia • Résilience • רוח (Ruach)

We Adapt and Thrive, Continuously Demonstrating our **Resilience**



Photos: Glenna Gordon; Michael Datikash

## Our Impact

Around the world, HIAS makes tangible changes in the lives of refugees and other forcibly displaced people, advancing their legal, social, and economic rights. Our experience and technical expertise, as well as our integration of international best practices, allows for our work to have real and sustained impact. We partner with government agencies and other humanitarian organizations to reach the greatest number of those in need. The core areas where we work include:

1. Legal Protection
2. Gender-Based Violence Response and Risk Reduction
3. Community-based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
4. Economic Inclusion

### Legal Protection

Refugees and other people forcibly displaced from home are fleeing persecution and violence. They need to be able to safely cross borders into countries where their lives are not at risk. Once over the border, they need information and legal representation to secure legal status and access their rights. Without that status, refugees are forced to live on the margins of society, sometimes for generations, without access to healthcare, education, dignified work, or safe shelter. HIAS begins by educating refugees about their rights, then secures protection by engaging in advocacy, legal representation, and strategic litigation, and working with government authorities.

### Gender-Based Violence Response and Risk Reduction

Compounded by rampant gender inequality, forced migration and displacement quickly erode the limited protections women, girls, and LGBTQ populations have, even in times of stability. HIAS is driven by their voices and needs, working to empower them and engage the whole community to reduce the risk of gender-based violence. We raise awareness so survivors know where and how to get help after experiencing violence. We train advocates and support existing services so that no survivor—regardless of age, sexual orientation, or

gender identity—suffers alone. We help communities begin the kind of transformative work that leads to longer-term change. We stay connected to and raise our collective voice alongside those of displaced women, girls, and LGBTQ populations globally.

### Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Violence, conflict, and displacement disrupt relationships and daily life, break down existing support systems, and have a devastating impact on mental health, overall wellbeing, and recovery. A supportive environment is essential to healing and recovery for refugees and other people forcibly displaced from their homes. One of the best ways to build a supportive environment is to strengthen existing relationships, networks, and practices which promote mental health and well-being and allow communities to cope and heal. We facilitate community support groups and psychological support from both lay and professional providers and ensure access to services for more intensive mental health support. Crucially, we sustain our efforts by building the psychosocial competence of HIAS personnel and stakeholders to respond to the acute distress of forcibly displaced persons.

### Economic Inclusion

When refugees and forcibly displaced people arrive in countries of asylum, they often need to adapt their skills to earn sustainable and safe livelihoods. HIAS supports refugees on their road to self-reliance, helping them to find programs focused on poverty eradication, employment, entrepreneurship, and financial services. We advocate for the rights of both refugees and local host communities to access dignified, sustainable, and safe work, alongside economic development.

### Emergency Response

In 2021, with the support of a transformational grant from MacKenzie Scott, HIAS embarked on an exciting new initiative to strengthen our global capacity to respond quickly to new humanitarian emergencies. HIAS' Emergency Department will work closely with country offices to create emergency preparedness plans and provide guidance to adapt core programs to emergency contexts. HIAS will also train a cadre of staff with specialized skills able to deploy quickly during emergencies for assessments, response activities, donor engagement, external communication, and advocacy. Through this multiyear initiative, HIAS will build the skills, systems, and organizational culture needed for effective coordination and response to emergencies.

## Accountability to Affected Populations

HIAS' Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Framework ensures the inclusion of refugees, other forcibly displaced people, and vulnerable host communities throughout the program cycle. Informed by the Core Humanitarian Standards and the principle of "Do No Harm," the framework pillars are: communication and transparency; feedback and response; participation and inclusion; and learning and adaptation.

HIAS ensures that program design is based on evidence from needs assessments, including the annual UNHCR participatory needs assessment, and consultation with affected

communities. HIAS shares information about its accountability commitments and available services in all country offices. HIAS proactively invites affected people to provide feedback on planned and ongoing activities through context-appropriate, accessible channels, ensuring that all affected people can voice feedback, recommendations, and concerns safely and equitably. HIAS uses feedback received to adapt ongoing programs and shape the design and implementation of future programming.

## Governance, Structure, and Policies

Globally, HIAS employs more than 1,300 staff in 16 countries, with headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland (U.S.).

HIAS' Board of Directors is made up of 22 members, including 10 women. It meets at least four times a year. The Board has three officers and operates with six active committees that meet regularly. Board members bring a wide range of professional and business experience to their service, including law, finance, education, and non-profit and refugee advocacy leadership.

HIAS staff are subject to a robust Code of Conduct and set of internal policies, including PSEA, Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment, Conflict of Interest, Privacy, Whistleblowing, Security and Emergency Preparedness, Information Security, Data Breach, Finance and Accounting, as well as others relating to procurement, travel, and reimbursements.



HIAS Israel law fellows in training, August 2020. **Photo:** HIAS Israel



## Context for Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants in Israel

There are approximately 30,000 asylum seekers in Israel, the majority having fled genocide in Sudan and forced military conscription in Eritrea, entering Israel after a perilous journey through the Sinai desert, where many experienced torture and sexual violence at the hands of smugglers. In 2013, Israel completed construction of a secure fence along the border with Egypt, virtually ending the influx of migrants. The vast majority of asylum seekers in Israel live in legal limbo waiting for their claims to be processed, which limits their access to protection and makes it difficult to lead a stable life. The Israeli government continues to struggle to implement an appropriate response, instead focusing primarily on pressure to leave and deterrence. As a result, it has been nearly impossible for applicants to gain asylum, with Israel's approval rate less than 1%. This is especially the case for asylum seekers with no legal representation. Although some refugees have been in the country for several years and speak Hebrew fluently, few prospects for local integration, immigration status, and access to basic rights exist. The COVID-19 crisis hit the asylum seeker community particularly hard, with over 70% losing their jobs.



## HIAS Programs in Israel

HIAS officially registered in Israel in 1950, but operated in the region even earlier, assisting Jews that were seeking safety from their home countries. For several decades, the office assisted newly arrived immigrants to integrate in Israel, helping them with education, jobs, housing, and financial support. HIAS Israel also assisted with the immigration of Jews from Ethiopia to Israel in the 1980s and 1990s. To this day—and for the last three decades—HIAS Israel has been awarding scholarships to student immigrants. In 2001, HIAS Israel taught the first class of refugee law in Israel, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and in 2003 co-founded the first Refugee Law Clinic at Tel Aviv University. Today, HIAS Israel provides critical **legal protection** to asylum seekers, both through direct representation by HIAS Israel's lawyers, as well as by pro bono attorneys and law students volunteering with the program. In addition to representation, the program provides legal counseling and information about rights, status, and access to services. HIAS realizes people carry a diversity of experiences and intersecting identities requiring unique support and solutions. As such, HIAS takes a holistic approach to its interventions and offers integrated programming in GBV prevention and response, community-based mental health and psychosocial support, economic inclusion, and legal protection.

HIAS Israel focuses on vulnerable clients, including survivors of torture and trafficking, LGBTQ asylum seekers, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), single-parent households, and individuals suffering from serious medical conditions. When asylum seekers fled kidnapping and torture by smugglers in the Sinai prior to Israel's 2013 completion of the border fence, HIAS Israel was central to providing protection and support upon their arrival in Israel. HIAS Israel's persistent advocacy and coalition building spurred a new movement

within Israeli civil society to push for more humane and fair treatment for asylum seekers and led to the emergence of a trailblazing pro bono legal network to support their cases. HIAS Israel continues to build on its legacy to advance more holistic protection and empowerment of asylum seekers most in need.

To respond to heightened needs during the pandemic, HIAS Israel modified its services and provided support remotely when necessary. HIAS Israel developed innovative solutions to support clients throughout the pandemic including cash assistance, providing paralegal support through social media, and training volunteers to help asylum seekers apply for unemployment benefits online.

In 2014, HIAS Israel created and now maintains a network of pro bono lawyers and students that can provide legal aid to asylum seekers and refugees. HIAS Israel has built the capacity of more than 200 attorneys to assist over 1,300 clients in 2019-2021, increasing the pro bono assistance available to asylum seekers in Israel by over 600%. HIAS Israel also served over 2,000 asylum seekers in those years through legal counseling, information sessions, and paralegal support. HIAS maintains a success rate of over 90% in legal cases, secured residency permits for at least 90 individuals over the last three years, and successfully initiated strategic litigation that challenged policy and had a broader impact on the refugee community in Israel. HIAS is the only NGO in Israel that offers pro bono legal representation to asylum seekers regarding family law issues.



Demonstrators, including HIAS Israel staff, in Tel Aviv protesting the deportations of African asylum seekers in March, 2018. **Photo:** HIAS Israel

HIAS Israel's referral sources have broadened in the past three years as more organizations and individuals become aware of the program. HIAS Israel receives many referrals for legal aid from shelters for victims of domestic violence, and there is a significant unmet need among this population. HIAS Israel supports GBV survivors who have experienced intimate partner abuse, human trafficking, and other forms of violence, as they seek protection from further risk, as well as referrals for other supports needed for recovery. HIAS Israel also assists LGBTQ asylum seekers who are often targeted by family and community members and continue to face risk in their host country, while struggling to sustain themselves without a work permit in Israel. Clients in this program come from all over the world, including Sudan, Eritrea, Sri Lanka, Georgia, Venezuela, and the West Bank.

In addition to offering direct legal representation, HIAS Israel and its partners initiate strategic litigation interventions to protect and advance refugee rights. These strategic interventions have included petitioning for the rights of older asylum seekers, challenging the deportation policy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, preventing the expulsion of Ukrainian asylum seekers to European countries, advocating against the "Deposit Law"—which requires asylum seekers to forfeit a significant portion of their wages unless and until they permanently leave the country—and challenging a fast-track asylum procedure that resulted in reopening many asylum claims that had been rejected.

HIAS Israel has also been actively responding to the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The team has advocated for fair entry and enhanced protection for Ukrainian women and girls, provided individual legal assistance to prevent deportation and reunite families, and, with local partners, assessed the immediate needs of newly arrived Ukrainians, including relating to gender-based violence, housing, and livelihoods. HIAS Israel has coordinated closely with government authorities, local service organizations, and the private sector to meet urgent needs. As the humanitarian and displacement crisis continues to unfold in Ukraine and the region, HIAS Israel will continue to provide Ukrainian refugees with the immediate help they need to live safely during their displacement.

In partnership with HIAS Austria HIAS Israel provides resettlement support and processing for those asylum seekers in Israel who have been referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).

HIAS Israel implements HIAS' global **Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Framework** and staff are trained on AAP principles and standard operating procedures. HIAS Israel shares information about its accountability commitments and available services in Tel Aviv through written information and through standard operating processes for case management with clients. New participants sign a power of attorney and a client's agreement both with HIAS and the volunteer working on their case. Volunteers sign an agreement with HIAS and all cases are updated in HIAS Israel's Case Management system. HIAS Israel also uses feedback and response mechanisms that are accessible and context appropriate. Clients take part in decision-making on the legal strategy for their own cases. HIAS Israel invites community leaders in Tel Aviv to serve as contact points during activity implementation, creating a link to the community and ensuring that all affected people can access services.

**Looking ahead at programs**, HIAS Israel is poised to expand its impact in the coming years with integrated GBV and economic inclusion programming. Clients who are trafficking victims or GBV survivors who have fled from abusive relationships and lack status in Israel are in a precarious situation, often finding themselves without shelter, struggling to sustain themselves, or resorting to survival sex. HIAS Israel would like to address gaps in GBV response with a dedicated protection caseworker to offer comprehensive support to clients most at risk. HIAS Israel also plans to develop additional capacity to better serve Palestinian clients seeking protection in Israel.



HIAS Israel's deputy director, Nimrod Avigal, assists a Sudanese asylum seeker to request temporary residency status in January, 2022. **Photo:** HIAS Israel

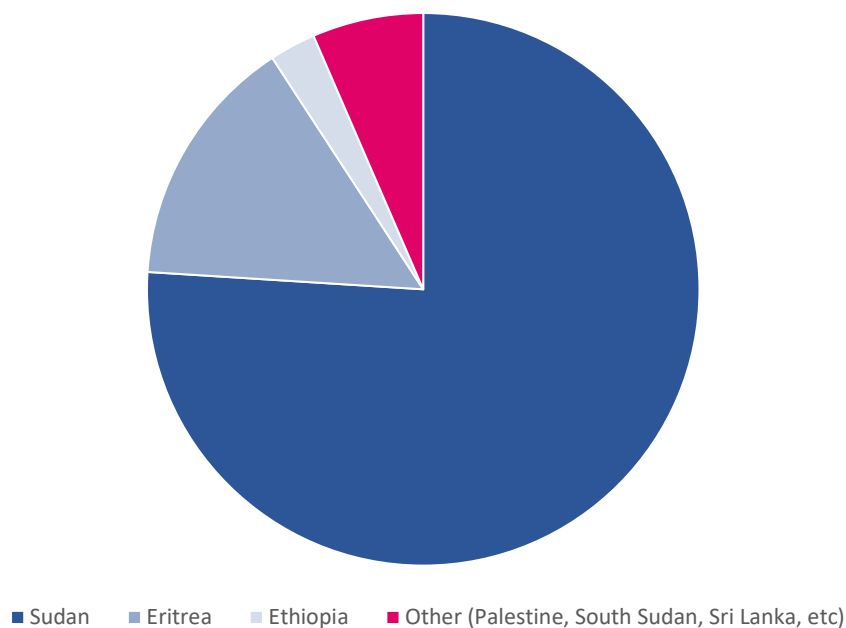
HIAS Israel also hopes to integrate economic inclusion programs to better support vulnerable asylum seekers. HIAS has already done significant work to assist at-risk refugees, including helping women secure child support payments through the family law program and bringing strategic litigation on the right to work. In addition to these legal tools, HIAS Israel would like to offer additional support to clients to secure and maintain stable and dignified sources of income. HIAS Israel is currently exploring joint programming with local grassroots partners and will conduct a labor market assessment in 2022 to identify gaps and opportunities. One potential intervention that is strongly tied to both legal protection and economic inclusion is

labor mobility. HIAS Israel would like to develop a labor mobility pilot program in the next two years and eventually scale up to support a range of populations, including asylum seeker youth. In collaboration with the headquarters-based emergency team, HIAS Israel will also continue to prepare for new emergencies.

## Coordination: Partners and Peer Networks

HIAS Israel will maintain and strengthen close working relationships with relevant local, national, and international stakeholders to advance protection for refugees and asylum seekers. Currently, HIAS Israel is part of a network of refugee-serving NGOs in Israel and participates in smaller working groups within this network. HIAS Israel works closely with UNHCR on issues related to protection and policy. HIAS Israel is also a member of the Israel Bar Committee dealing with immigration issues, as well as the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants in Europe. HIAS Israel is part of a coalition of feminist organizations and will strengthen collaboration with grassroots feminist groups and community-based refugee organizations. HIAS Israel would also like to explore building and fostering new relationships with feminist organizations assisting Palestinian women in Israel and the West Bank, while recognizing the political complexities. Going forward, HIAS Israel will also invest further in partnerships with international organizations including IRAP and PILnet.

**Graph 1: Populations Served in 2021**



## Operational Support for Programs

As HIAS' programs expand to meet new global needs, HIAS remains committed to delivering the highest quality of services to those it seeks to support and empower. To enable country teams to succeed and thrive, HIAS will invest new operational resources in our programs, processes, and people.

The HIAS Israel team is comprised of 13 staff located in Tel Aviv. HIAS Israel's Country Director, Deputy Director, and project coordinators make up the leadership team. Each HIAS Israel staff member abides by HIAS' Code of Conduct and other HIAS policies and procedures in line with global best practices. All staff members have completed trainings on **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**. These trainings are updated and repeated regularly to ensure both prevention and response to any reported incidents of SEA. HIAS applies a gender lens when analyzing, planning, and making decisions across all its operations, in order to ensure the safety, security, and wellbeing of the entire organization's staff.



HIAS Israel law fellows in training, August 2020. **Photo:** HIAS Israel

HIAS invests in the skills and capacity of staff worldwide, supporting a wide range of local, national, regional, and international trainings for staff. Going forward, HIAS will ensure that all international staff have diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) training. HIAS Israel will request additional training resources in line with emerging programming and operational needs, including language skills and management courses and support with teambuilding.

To support the **wellbeing of staff**, HIAS has a global contract with the Konterra Group, which provides support both for work-related and personal issues. HIAS Israel staff participate monthly in group sessions with a psychologist to prevent burnout and vicarious trauma and to give staff tools for enhancing their wellbeing. The goal of these efforts is to enhance program outcomes as well as improve staff satisfaction, retention, and wellbeing across the country team.

HIAS is committed to developing an effective, sustainable **safety and security** risk management system that is in line with its values and mission. In the next two years, HIAS Israel will continue to participate in security trainings and workshops with support from headquarters. HIAS Israel has hired security guards for activities. HIAS Israel has access to bomb shelters and there are contingency plans in place should escalating violence occur. The HIAS Israel's team is currently split between several offices on three floors in the office building and would like to identify a larger office space that would allow its legal teams to be in one location (the USRAP office would need to remain in a separate space).

Globally, HIAS is rolling out a **Digital Transformation Strategy** to ensure that participants' personal information is digitally secured and protected. The strategy will also create one universal source of information and collaboration; ensure all organizational knowledge is standardized, digitized, organized, and discoverable; ensure data around inputs, outcomes, and impact is readily accessible; help employees collaborate on gathering and building resources on this information platform; and easily share and leverage data from partners and affiliates. HIAS will be providing annual refresher training to all country offices on IT tools and procedures. To improve internet speed, HIAS Israel hopes to transition to fiber-optic communication in 2022.

With support from headquarters, HIAS Israel will also continue to review and strengthen as needed procedures and tools related to data and reporting as well as finance and compliance, in line with donor requirements and international standards. HIAS Israel will work with headquarters to establish an Enterprise Resource Planning - (ERP) system. The ERP system will improve alignment of operations, finance, programs, and human resources, allowing for more efficient and cost-effective country operations.

**Graph 2: People Reached by Program Area in 2021**



## Donor and Development Strategy

HIAS is committed to growing and diversifying its donor base in each country of operation. With support from headquarters HIAS Israel is developing a resource mobilization strategy to sustain, increase, and diversify funding sources, building on its longstanding reputation for comprehensive and flexible programming in a challenging operating environment. HIAS Israel gratefully acknowledges support from UNHCR and longstanding partnerships with the Rukin and Shapiro foundations. HIAS Israel will map and identify new private sector, philanthropic, and government donors to advance new partnerships and programs in the coming years. HIAS Israel will present new programming ideas such as integrated GBV and women's empowerment and economic inclusion programs to current and prospective donors, including private sector partners. HIAS Israel will also look to European funders and others to continue to build its core legal aid program.





Attorney Rachel Friedman, HIAS Israel's family law program coordinator, and a client of the family law program in 2020. **Photo:** HIAS Israel

## Communications, Policy, and Advocacy

HIAS Israel's advocacy efforts for over a decade have focused on the need for a fair asylum system in Israel. This includes advocating for a higher rate of refugee recognition and for policies that reflect Israel's obligations to protect refugees rather than pressure them to leave the country. HIAS Israel will continue to advocate for asylum seekers' access to rights and services, and greater protection and support for the vulnerable groups among the asylum seeker population. HIAS Israel will also continue to advocate for expanding state-funded legal aid for asylum seekers. HIAS Israel is also strengthening advocacy around the inclusion of a gender sensitive lens among different state authorities and decision makers who assess claims brought by asylum seeking and stateless women who are GBV survivors or at risk of GBV.

To maximize impact, HIAS Israel coordinates advocacy strategy and messaging through the NGO refugee working group. This collaboration is particularly strong during times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, or in response to new government policies such as deportations or newly introduced economic measures. HIAS Israel's legal team is a part of a forum of lawyers in Israel who represent asylum seekers and often coordinate strategies and share information. HIAS Israel plans to strengthen ties with organizations like the European Council on Refugees and Exile and PILnet.

HIAS Israel communicates regularly with key stakeholders, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, the legal community, and the general public in Israel to provide critical information and updates, as well as generate support for the mission. Public criticism of the Israeli government is often channeled through Israeli media outlets, although in some instances HIAS Israel will turn to international or U.S. media. With support from headquarters, HIAS Israel holds public events and webinars with U.S.-based organizations which also advocate for similar issues concerning asylum seekers in Israel.

HIAS Israel would like to increase its social media visibility, including Facebook updates and blog posts which could be shared with donors and supporters. HIAS Israel's informational videos include Arabic and Tigrinya translation. Going forward, HIAS Israel would welcome additional in-country support to advance communication and advocacy objectives. Regionally, HIAS will work to ensure that people traveling across Africa and Eurasia are aware of HIAS services and locations and other available resources across different countries through digital and other information tools.

**Cover Photo:** HIAS Israel  
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