Civic Initiatives for Asylum Seekers during COVID-19 against State-enforced Exclusion

Maayan Ravid*

Abstract

This article reviews the difficulties faced by Sudanese and Eritrean asylum seekers in Israel during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the response of Israeli civil society. It is premised on the notion that African asylum seekers in Israel have been subjected to state enforced structural and racialized exclusion since their arrival in the state. Systemic exclusion has had a detrimental effect on the asylum seekers' wellbeing that was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The article surveys various forms of civil society aid discourses that developed in the country in support of African asylum seekers. It presents new findings from empirical research conducted with aid initiatives during the pandemic regarding civic activism. It focuses on local mutual aid initiatives that involved asylum seekers, highlighting how such initiatives increased during the pandemic, accompanied by a discourse of care. It argues that local initiatives, guided by care, can resist state-led exclusion and power inequalities in activism.

Keywords: asylum seekers, civic society, aid discourse, mutual aid, local activism, care

***Maayan Ravid, PhD. Postdoctoral Fellow at Bar Ilan University, Department of Geography and Environment Maayan Ravid maayan.ravid@biu.ac.il**

Introduction

When COVID-19 reached Israel in March 2020, government restrictions and lockdowns soon followed. Globally, unprecedented numbers of people found themselves unemployed, and lacking basic needs and services. In the face of the failure of governments to deliver services and provide support, solidarity and mutual aid initiatives emerged (e.g., Chevée, 2021; Pleyers, 2020, pp. 299–301; Sitrin, 2020). While COVID-19 has affected all individuals globally, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants have experienced the negative impacts of the pandemic disproportionally due to pre-existing inequalities and exclusion. In the words of Marina Sitrin (2020): "We are all in the same terrible storm that is COVID-19, we are not all in the same boat" (p. xvi).

This paper discusses the situation of some 30,000 Sudanese and Eritrean asylum seekers in Israel during COVID-19, contextualized in their pre-existing exclusion by the state. It focuses on civic aid initiatives that operated during the pandemic to support this group. It explores the work of local mutual aid initiatives, highlighting the importance of such work and its potential for promoting inclusion. It also examines the discourse of care that emerged from the crisis and its political potential for combatting division. As noted elsewhere:

> Mutual aid work is mostly invisibilized and undervalued in mainstream and left narratives about social movement resistance, despite its significance as a tool for opposing systems of domination. The marginalization of care work as uncompensated feminized labor, the mystification of law and policy reform… impede a focus on mutual aid. However, mutual aid projects are central to effective social movements, and as conditions worsen, mutual aid projects are becoming an even more essential strategy for supporting survival, building new infrastructure, and mobilizing large numbers of people to work and fight for a new world (Spade, 2020, p. 147).

While crises introduce threats, anxiety and a host of other negative feelings sparked by fear about one's survival and wellbeing, they also provide fertile ground for change and resilience. In response to a global crisis and the disastrous outcomes of state enforced exclusion, Israeli civil society increasingly

tried to mitigate the harm to the asylum-seeking community during the first year of the pandemic. This article focuses on such "invisibilized and undervalued" forms of local mutual aid and highlights the ways in which care can promote inclusion. The article is guided by three primary questions:

1. What pre-existing conditions precipitated African asylum seekers' humanitarian crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How did Israeli civil society respond to the asylum seekers' humanitarian needs during the pandemic and?
3. What does civic organizing and the discourse about aid teach us about activism in times of crisis?

Asylum seekers from Sudan and Eritrea entered Israel by foot through unauthorized border points on Israel's border with Egypt's Sinai desert between 2005 and 2012. These crossings came to a halt with Israel's completion of a border barrier. The state acknowledged that Sudanese and Eritrean nationals cannot be deported due to risks in their home countries. They were permitted to remain in Israel through policies of "temporary group protection" or "collective non-removal" (Kritzman-Amir, 2012). When Sudanese and Eritreans were first able to apply for asylum in 2012, thousands did. Yet most applications remain pending with Israel's Ministry of the Interior, and Sudanese and Eritreans asylum seekers continue to be referred to as "infiltrators" (Israel State Comptroller, 2018b). Despite recognizing them as non-removable, the state repeatedly threatens to detain and deport this group collectively, leaving them with a tenuous legal standing after more than a decade of life in the state.

In Israel, a wide array of exclusionary measures shape all aspects of asylum seekers' everyday lives – legal, economic, welfare, health, and social. Many argue that this exclusion is racialized and structurally embedded in state policies (Anteby-Yemini, 2017; Rosenhek, 2011; Willen, 2019). This approach is consistent with increasingly hostile, criminalizing, and racializing treatment of asylum seekers and migrants across the Global North (Armenta, 2017; Bhatia, 2015; Canning, 2017; De Genova, 2018; Mountz, 2020). Such exclusion had detrimental effects on asylum seekers' wellbeing prior to the COVID-19.

The first part of the paper reviews the literature and theory about different forms of systemic exclusion that shape African asylum seekers' realities in Israel, and the civil society aid discourses that

developed in the country. The second part presents findings from empirical research conducted with aid initiatives during the pandemic. It describes civic initiatives that offered aid to asylum seekers, and the aid discourses they employed. It focuses on local mutual aid initiatives, highlighting how such initiatives increased during the pandemic, accompanied by a new discourse of care. It argues that local initiatives, guided by care, have the potential to combat state-led exclusion.

Theoretical Background

This section describes the context of African asylum seekers' lives in Israel, prior to the pandemic, that are shaped by state-enforced exclusion. Exclusion takes multiple forms: tenuous legal status, limited access to health and welfare services, precarious economic standing, physical segregation, and social marginalization. State policies methodically and consistently target this distinct group of racialized migrants and made their life precarious prior to the onset of COVID-19. Knowledge of this context is crucial for understanding how and why asylum seekers struggled during the pandemic. The second section discusses the civic aid and protection discourse that developed in Israel in support of asylum seekers, or in response to state-enforced exclusion. The final section highlights several areas in which pre-existing exclusion exacerbated the difficulties faced by asylum seekers during COVID-19.

State Exclusion of African Asylum Seekers

Legal Exclusion

In Israel, African asylum seekers are legally defined as "infiltrators." In accordance with the 1954 Prevention of Infiltration Law, for over a decade, the vast majority have held a state-issued 2(A)5 visa (also called a "Conditional Release Visa" or a "Temporary Protection Visa"). For other non-Palestinians and non-Jews, entry to and residence in Israel are governed by the 1952 Entry to Israel Law. The Prevention of Infiltration Law applies to those who enter from an unauthorized border point. It was one of the first pieces of security legislation passed in the newly established state that sought to prevent Palestinians, regarded as terrorist threats, from crossing Israel's newly established borders and returning to their lands. This law allows for more extensive use of state power to administratively detain border crossers, with few procedural protections (Berman, 2015; Bracha, 1998).

At the close of 2020, 27,930 persons from Sudan and Eritrea (20% and 71% respectively) – defined by the state as infiltrators - resided in Israel (Population and Immigration Authority, 2020). Many of these people fled genocide, forced and indefinite military conscription, or other forms of human rights abuses. Over half of this group has submitted asylum requests but less than 1% have been granted refugee status (Israel State Comptroller, 2018b). Most asylum applications remain pending for years (Rozen et al., 2020), in contrast to the high rates of recognition of Sudanese and Eritrean asylum seekers across the Global North.

In recent years, apart from the southernmost city of Eilat, visa renewal has been restricted to a single location – the Ministry of the Interior's office in Bnei Brak. In the period prior to the pandemic, asylum seekers had to endure long waits, unsanitary conditions, and humiliating treatment during their frequent visits to this office (Sadan et al., 2018). Many have described encounters with state officials at the Ministry of the Interior as a form of abuse, corroborated in a documentary report on the workings of Bnei Brak immigration staff (The Source, 2020). Due to the requirement to frequently renew visas, the bureaucratic hurdles inherent in this process and abuse by state agents, some have avoided contact with the state and, instead, work and live in Israel without state-issued documentation.

Exclusion from Welfare and Health Services

Unlike other kinds of migrant visas, the 2(A)5 visa is a temporary document that does not entitle its holder to social, health, or welfare rights. Asylum seekers, for the most part, remain outside the national healthcare system and, therefore, cannot access regular, preventative, or chronic health care (Gutzeit & Shamir, 2017). Some are insured privately and, to a limited extent, by their employers. Most rely on emergency services and lack follow-up care or medication (Israel State Comptroller, 2014, pp. 63–64). While, since 2015, children can receive health insurance through the public healthcare system, this arrangement is contingent upon monthly payments and is not available to adults (Moss et al., 2019).

Most asylum seekers are also not eligible for pension funds or social security. Thus, in the case of job loss, they cannot receive unemployment or social security benefits. An exception has been made for individuals with acute vulnerabilities such as survivors of trafficking or domestic abuse, the

homeless, and the disabled (Israel State Comptroller, 2014, pp. 64–65, 2018a, p. 152). Asylum seekers, therefore, almost completely lack institutional safety nets.

Economic Exclusion

Asylum seekers also experience extreme economic exclusion. Their ability to work legally is unclear and they experience frequent violations of their employment rights, leading to their having a precarious position in the labor market (Israel State Comptroller, 2018a, p. 151). The top of the 2(A)5 visa paper states: "This document is not a work permit." Though legally allowed to work due to a government issued commitment to the non-enforcement of restrictions, this phrase discourages employment and is often confusing or criminalizing in the eyes of employers. Additionally, the state taxes employers at a high rate to discourage the employment of asylum seekers. In light of these restrictive and exploitative conditions, many asylum seekers work illegally in difficult and dangerous jobs that pay in cash but leave them extremely vulnerable to exploitation (Israel State Comptroller, 2018a, pp. 162–166). No other group of migrants in Israel has been collectively regulated in this way for such a prolonged period.

A particularly harsh form of economic sanction was implemented between 2017 and 2020. The Deposit Law deducted 20% of asylum seekers' salaries every month to encourage them to leave. Employers deposited the funds in a special account accessible only to the asylum seekers if they agreed to exit the country (Kaufman, 2017). The Israeli Supreme Court annulled the law in April 2020, and the deposited funds were released. However, many employers did not deposit the funds properly, leaving their workers robbed of earnings totaling 700 million shekels (Guthmann & Kaufman, 2019; Ilan, 2019). The law reduced this population to unprecedented, state-induced, community-wide impoverishment. Prolonged economic disenfranchisement had devastating side effects on the community's health and wellbeing (Mehartzion et al., 2017).

Physical Exclusion

The Israeli government has made on-going attempts to either physically remove or segregate African asylum seekers. The first attempt of this nature began with push-backs to Egypt at the border (Afeef, 2009, pp. 12–13). In 2008, the government initiated a geographical containment policy dubbed "Hadera-Gedera" intended to prevent asylum seekers from settling in Israel's central region (Berman,

2015, pp. 194–195). In 2012, shortly after the establishment of the state of South Sudan, Israel deported South Sudanese nationals, exposing them to great risks (Lijnders, 2013).

Since 2013, the state has encouraged asylum seekers to undergo what it terms "voluntary departure" (Gerver, 2017). In 2013, the government established the Holot Detention Center. Operated by Israel's Prison Authority, Holot exclusively held Sudanese and Eritrean men in administrative detention in harsh and desolate conditions in the Negev desert (Yaron Mesegna & Ramati, 2017). The stated aim of Holot was to prevent asylum seekers from settling in urban centers and to pressure them to leave Israel "voluntarily" (Ziegler, 2015). Throughout its five years of operation, Holot held over 13,000 detainees for approximately one year of detention. In March 2018, towards the closure of Holot, the government attempted to forcibly relocate African asylum seekers in Israel to Rwanda and Uganda (Yaron, 2018). Individuals released from Holot faced limitations on where they could reside; often they were unable to return to the cities where they had established connections, communities and networks of support. This limitation included Tel Aviv where most Israeli NGOs providing this group with assistance are located.

Social Exclusion

African asylum seekers have also experienced severe social and public exclusion. The media and politicians have promulgated a discourse of securitization and criminalization that has stigmatized asylum seekers in the eyes of the Israel public (Hochman, 2015; Moscovitz, 2016; Orr & Ajzenstadt, 2020; Weinblum, 2019). Unquestioningly, the widespread use of the term "infiltrators" and the attendant legislation have contributed to the state and the public seeing them as a security threat (Berman & Ziegler, 2015; Ram & Yacobi, 2012, pp. 161–166; Rosenberg Rubins, 2019). These discourses have been used to justify detention, policing, and degrading treatment at the hands of state institutions and politicians.

Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers have been confined to Israel's socio-economic margins and impoverished urban centers. These areas, particularly, south Tel Aviv, are characterized by neglect, poverty, drug use, and crime. Furthermore, asylum seekers live alongside disenfranchised Jewish residents (mainly Jews of Middle Eastern and North African descent) whose quality of life is negatively affected by the systemic neglect in these areas. These racialized spaces are frequently the site of

hostility and tension between the two groups (Anteby-Yemini, 2015; Cohen, 2015; Shamur, 2018). Thus, asylum seekers have become associated with social strife, crime, and poverty.

Civic Aid and Protection Discourses

In contrast to government led exclusion, support for or inclusion of African asylum seekers has also developed in Israel. Inclusion takes different shapes and forms, including daily interpersonal interactions and efforts to provide the groups with services, protect their rights and advocate for them. Non-profit organizations, civic initiatives, political movements, employers, educational institutions, communities, and individuals have engaged with asylum seekers across Israel and over time. While most scholarship on Israeli support and aid to asylum seekers focuses on human rights organizations and political community activism, countless other positive interactions, and acts of allyship occur daily. According to the existing literature, there are two major discourses about refugee protection and aid work targeting African asylum seekers in Israel: a rights discourse and an identity discourse.

The work of human rights organizations is largely framed according to international human rights discourses (Kritzman-Amir & Kemp, 2008). According to this view, rights stem from a normative liberal concept of universal deservedness. They are regarded as inalienable and inherent to all human beings and have been recognized by, and enshrined in, international agreements and conventions. They are not contingent on legal status or national law, but, rather, are understood as natural rights that should be equally available to everyone (Mann, 2015, pp. 464–465).

NGOs in Israel often advocate for rights enshrined in international conventions. For example, a report published by the Forum for Refugees and Asylum Seekers' Organizations in Israel opened with a quote from the 1951 Convention on Refugees. The group describes itself and its work as:

> six human rights organizations, working in cooperation to promote recognition of the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Israel; to mend the deficiencies in government policy, and to establish an asylum policy that befits Israel's legal and moral obligations (Forum for Refugees and Asylum Seekers' Organizations in Israel, 2021).

These organizations utilize a discourse based on a stated commitment to international law or basic human rights including specific rights related to employment, health and more. They base their claims on the state's legal and moral obligations to provide or protect universal human rights.

An identity-based discourse, on the other hand, draws on different ethical and political considerations. In Israel, there are strong discourses focused on the collective memory of the Holocaust (Paz, 2011; Ram & Yacobi, 2012, pp. 157–161; Willen, 2010), or the Jewish identity of the state (Rubinstein et al., 2009). Activism and advocacy on behalf of asylum seekers usually stems from the personal identification or experiences of those using such discourses, including individuals' family stories, Jewish values, and national and local narratives.

Identity discourse is used to construct a common ground for action – such as shared histories of oppression, or value systems – with clear ethical and emotive aspects informing the aid work (Mann, 2015, pp. 467–468). Sarah Willen (2010) has termed the connection between Jews and asylum seekers a "kinship of genocide." She observed how this approach has spread across diverse sectors in the Israeli public since the early arrival of Sudanese asylum seekers to the state (pp. 513–515). Specifically, Willen outlines how political emotions moved Israeli activists to act for, and relate to, Darfurian refugees based on the Jewish state's founding trauma and narrative of victimization.

These two discourses are not mutually exclusive or clear-cut. For example, in writing about NGO discourse in Israel, Aime Scheiner (2019, pp. 272–280) notes that non-profits in Israel primarily employ a discourse related to Jewish identity and Holocaust memory. Conversely, activists are often well-versed in a rights-based discourse and use it alongside or instead of an identity discourse.

While both types of refugee protection discourses have been useful in mobilizing action, some believe that these narratives can and often do construct recipients of aid in ways that negate their individuality, subjectivity, and agency. For example, in refugee aid advocacy, asylum seekers are often depicted as passive and helpless recipients of help (Ghebrezghiabher & Motzafi-Haller, 2015; Scheiner, 2019). Furthermore, hierarchies of suffering that stratify deservedness amongst different groups of migrants have emerged. These hierarchies can generate or preserve dependency and unequal power dynamics between organizations, activists, and the recipients of aid (Mann, 2015, p. 467; Willen, 2010, p. 517). These critiques are consistent with the global literature that outlines the risks of constructing refugees and migrants as victimized, weak, and unwell by humanitarian aid organizations (de Waal, 1997; Harrell-Bond, 2002; Malkki, 1996).

This article sheds light on a third aid discourse that became prevalent during the pandemic – a care discourse. Such discourse draws on the very basic, common, primal experience of being cared for. It does not require shared cultural norms or liberal ideas regarding tolerance or rights (Held, 2006, p. 132). Action animated by care is, therefore, accessible to a wide range of people and applicable to all. Tronto and Fisher (1990) identify care as comprised of four phases: (1) caring about - awareness of something or someone else's need for care, (2) caring for - an assumption of responsibility to meet identified needs, (3) caregiving - actual delivery of a material response to those in need and (4) care receiving - the response of those who received the caregiving.

A scholarly "tradition of care" has evolved within feminist theory and ethics since the 1980s. It views care as a way to live more justly in a world characterized by inequality and domination (Gilligan, 1982; Held, 1993, 2006; Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Tronto, 1993). Care is understood in its various articulations as a value, a disposition and a practice that involves consideration of the needs or problems of others as a basis for action (Held, 2006, p. 4; Tronto, 1993, p. 104). An ethics of care is not a utopian ideal that conjures up a world without differences where everyone likes each other or agrees. Rather, as Jane Tronto (1993, p. x) writes, care begins with acknowledging boundaries and paying attention to who they exclude as a prerequisite for action. I argue that a new discourse of care emerged in Israel in the form of activism for asylum seekers during the pandemic.

Systemic Exclusion Meets Crisis

While containment measures during the pandemic negatively affected most people globally, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants have been particularly burdened (Meer et al., 2021; Mukumbang et al., 2020). The pre-existing precariousness of their lives has been exacerbated by the pandemic. As Sitrin (2020) noted, "Structural inequality shows itself in crisis and disaster, and this one is revealing all the ugliness and systemic oppressions and inequalities most of our societies were built upon" (p. xvi). This was also the case in Israel.

Pandemic lockdowns and market closures left many asylum seekers unemployed and unable to pay for rent or food. Unlike Israelis, they could not access social welfare benefits or government measures to alleviate the negative effects of the pandemic. Due to the exclusionary state policies outlined above, most asylum seekers had very little money in savings. As most asylum seekers were

employed in the service, cleaning, and hospitality sectors – restaurants, hotels, shopping malls, and offices – their rate of unemployment skyrocketed. NGOs reported that around 75% of asylum seekers in Israel lost their income during the first COVID-19 lockdown (ASSAF, 2020) and this number subsequently rose as high as 80%. A Ministry of Health and Tel Aviv Municipality survey estimated that over 50% experienced severe food insecurity and hunger (Bleichfeld Megnazi et al., 2021). Increased poverty, eviction threats, domestic abuse, and homelessness were reported (Forum for Refugees and Asylum Seekers' Organizations in Israel, 2020), as well as malnutrition (Kashti, 2021).

The pandemic hit at-risk populations particularly hard. Many women (approximately 5,000 in Israel) had already suffered from intersecting forms of violence and oppression in their home country, along with the migration journey and in Israel. Furthermore, approximately 7,000 undocumented minors were forced to be home for months on end. Finally, Israel is home to approximately 4,000 asylum seekers who have survived torture and who were left without support (ASSAF, 2020). These at-risk groups and others sought assistance from family, friends, and community networks of support. Such networks existed long before the pandemic and enabled the community to survive previous hardships and crises. However, having been systemically and collectively marginalized for at least a decade prior to the crisis, resources and savings in the community were depleted. While the pandemic and closures impacted everyone, they exacerbated the already harsh reality of this marginalized population, precipitating a humanitarian crisis.

Methodology

This paper is based on ethnographic research among civic initiatives that supported African asylum seekers in Israel between March 2020 and May 2021, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Aid involved the collection and distribution of food and other basic supplies. I was embedded as a volunteer driver, collaborator, and sometimes organizer, with five initiatives.[1] Most food distribution shifts involved interaction with NGOs, Israeli organizers, and Eritrean or Sudanese activists. Delivery included the collection and distribution of supplies to asylum seekers' apartments or community centers.

[1] Over fourteen months I volunteered as a driver for ARDC, March-June 2020 bi-weekly distributions; a driver for the Food for the Soul initiative, June 2020-May 2021 - collecting bags of food in Tel Aviv on Friday mornings for deliveries in Tel Aviv and Netanya; a driver and collaborator with the Culture of Solidarity initiatives – participated in mobilization meetings for Netivot and Sderot, fundraised and delivered to Ashdod and Ashkelon. Collaborated with the Herzliya network.

Most delivery days started early in the morning and were finished in the afternoon, usually repeated every two or three weeks. On-going organizing and fundraising provided the resources for these activities. Aid initiatives discussed in this paper took place in the cities of Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Sderot, Netivot, Netanya, and Herzliya.

Ethnographic methods of data collection require long-term, deep, and continuous interaction with sites and communities to produce situated, experience-based knowledge (Cerwonka & Malkki, 2007, pp. 163–165; Haraway, 1988). In this case, I benefited from fifteen years of activism with asylum seeking communities that allowed me to become familiar with them and establish a degree of trust.

Following Cerwonka and Malkki (2007), ethnography is understood here as "simultaneously a *critical theoretical practice*, a *quotidian ethical practice*, and an *improvisational practice*" (p. 164 emphasis in the original). As such, my data collection evolved along with the pandemic through my varied engagements with the community, particularly with regard to issues of positionality, reflexivity, and care.

I collected the data from hundreds of hours of participant observations and informal conversations during distribution shifts and planning meetings, semi-structured interviews with aid initiative organizers, and written digital material. Eight interviews were conducted in Hebrew or English using phone and Zoom due to social distancing limitations. Written material came from posts on Facebook, WhatsApp, email communications, and public newsletters. I also use excerpts from interviews and written communications with six activists - three Israeli and three Eritrean informants between the ages of 30 and 45. I use their real names because they indicated their consent and permission to publish them.

I analyzed the data using the principles of grounded theory. This method involves "systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). Ideally, this approach mitigates a priori assumptions. Accordingly, analytical categories are developed from ongoing analysis and engagement with the field (Hood, 2010, pp. 157–159). Given my dual roles as both activist and researcher, I tried to balance my personal worldviews with my academic commitment to an unbiased assessment of the information.

Due to the geographic spread of asylum seekers and the differences among them, the material here is not representative of all personal or community experiences. Additionally, many individuals, predominantly Israeli and asylum-seeking women, assisted both asylum seekers and other populations in need during the pandemic and are not discussed in the paper. A diversity of experiences, myriad forms of action, and gendered aspects of aid work are not covered due to the limited scope of this work. African community-based initiatives are also beyond the scope of this paper, and merit separate study. The paper does, however, provide rich subjective insights into and snapshots of the experiences of some asylum seekers and those who helped them in the hope of learning about activism in times of crisis.

Findings

Civic Aid and Discourse during the Pandemic

While Israeli citizens relied on welfare services, social security, unemployment benefits, and supplemental relief grants from the government during the crisis, asylum seekers were not eligible for this aid. Civil society and many non-profit organizations already serving migrant communities tried to fill the gap.[2] Many either expanded their regular activities or pivoted to address emerging needs.

One such example is The Garden Library.[3] Ordinarily, the organization focuses on community empowerment and education. However, with the first lockdown, they redirected their resources to humanitarian aid. The Garden Library provided support to over 550 households throughout all of the lockdowns, distributing thousands of food packages, warm meals, shopping vouchers, diapers, and baby food. They also continued to run educational activities that could take place online, disseminated information, and aided in bureaucratic matters (The Garden Library, 2021).

[2] The article focusses only on humanitarian needs and assistance. Other COVID-19 related services were provided by national and local government. The Tel Aviv municipal authority facilitated testing, vaccination, and quarantine services for the asylum-seeking community, and other uninsured or undocumented groups. The municipality also provided food and humanitarian relief through its unit, Mesila- Aid and Information Center for Migrant Workers and Refugees https://www.tel-aviv.gov.il/en/Live/Community/Pages/RefugeesandMigrantWorkersMesila.aspx. Mesila distributed shopping vouchers to other organizations working with the community, as did CIMI https://www.cimi.org.il

[3] The Garden Library (Arteam) is a non-profit organization established in 2009 to promote the human rights of asylum seekers and migrant workers. Art and educational programs provide members of migrant communities with tools and skills that improve their situation in the job market, their understanding of Israeli society, and their ability to advocate for their rights https://en.thegardenlibrary.com/.

ASSAF organization[4] also expanded its remit. Normally, it focuses on psychosocial support for vulnerable groups. During the pandemic, it provided humanitarian assistance on a broad scale including the distribution of thousands of food vouchers, packages, and financial aid. The organization reported an upsurge in complaints of domestic violence and mental health problems along with reports of increased numbers of families at risk (ASSAF, 2020). Despite the frequent lockdowns it continued its on-going activities: psychosocial support, information dissemination, and youth meetings online.

During the first lockdown various existing organizations fundraised for aid and provided initial humanitarian support. As the pandemic restrictions continued, many NGOs stopped providing food relief and redirected their focus and resources to other lines of work. Citizen initiatives then became a main source of food and basic needs.

Civic Movements for African Asylum Seekers

During the first year of COVID-19 citizen initiatives provided crucial support for asylum seekers in Israel. Two initiatives stood out in terms of their scope and duration. Both were founded by women who foresaw the impending humanitarian crisis and began organizing their communities and resources. The two initiatives – Food for the Soul and Culture of Solidarity – worked in different ways to collect and distribute food and funds. They also mobilized hundreds of volunteers.

Culture of Solidarity is a movement that sprang out of the spontaneous actions of three Israeli women who met through Tel Aviv's cultural and culinary scene - Alma Beck, Danielle Cantor, and Leah Tonic. During the first lockdown of March 2020, they collected surplus food from restaurants and offices that were shut due to COVID-19, and distributed it to individuals in need. Overwhelmed by the needs on the ground and the tremendous response they received, they recruited and mobilized hundreds of volunteers in a movement of mutual aid, to:

[4] ASSAF is an Israeli NGO established in 2007 with the mission of providing psychosocial aid for vulnerable groups among asylum seekers: minors, survivors of torture, the chronically ill, people with disabilities, single parent families, and women suffering from domestic abuse https://assaf.org.il/en/.

> support the most vulnerable communities among us - seniors, refugees, domestic abuse survivors, single mothers, religious and secular, Jews and Palestinians alike, and others who were not getting their basic needs met (Culture of Solidarity, 2020).[5]

The initiative, therefore, provided aid to asylum seekers as well as other vulnerable populations. They set up programs to help elderly citizens with cooking, groceries, and emotional support, alongside home repair projects and debt coverage for families in need.

This community of activists developed an initiative that collects surplus produce from wholesalers and farmers (see, for example, Figure 1) and dry food donations, and prepares and distributes food boxes or home cooked meals. On its website, leaders of the initiative describe it as a:

> A growing community of everyday people who feel a call to action and respond to a situation in which the welfare system and non-profits are unable to meet the demands for help during this devastating crisis (Culture of Solidarity, 2020).[6]

They enlisted restaurants, businesses, and individuals to join in ongoing activities and collaborated with community organizations among the asylum seekers for distribution and needs assessment. Storage, packing, and distribution took place in empty nightclubs, restaurants, art galleries, and other businesses that volunteered their space. By the end of the first year of activity, they were delivering 700-1000 boxes of food every two weeks (see, for example, Figure 2). In a newsletter circulated during the winter of 2021, they cited a sense of urgency and the hope that their work would inspire and cultivate a culture of solidarity (Culture of Solidarity, 2021).[7]

During an organizing meeting on Zoom, Danielle described aid as a response to the state's failure to provide basic rights:

> We tried to contact local councils or municipalities, but they refused to cooperate. The community is in a total humanitarian disaster, the state and institutions that are supposed to

[5] Culture of Solidarity. Homepage. https://www.cultureofsolidarity.com

[6] Culture of Solidarity. Homepage. https://www.cultureofsolidarity.com

[7] Culture of Solidarity. Jan-Feb 2021 Newsletter. https://mailchi.mp/0dd10f85682a/53zpygd5o8

take care of people are failing them. By working together and combining our resources, we can build safety nets that provide an alternative to the state and its welfare apparatus (D. Cantor, Organizers Zoom Meeting, January 21, 2021).

Recognizing the failure of the state to provide rights, and the limited capacities of NGOs, citizens organized to provide basic rights.

Figure 1: Culture of Solidarity volunteers sort vegetables

Figure 2: Culture of Solidarity volunteers load boxes

Similarly, Food for the Soul initiative was founded in early 2020 to address skyrocketing rates of food insecurity amongst asylum seekers. It was founded by four Israeli women – Yonit Naftali, Orli Fridkes, Noa Haviv, and Michal Zimri – who had all previously worked with asylum seeking communities. They organized to provide for the basic nutritional needs of children and the most vulnerable members of the community (Food for the Soul, 2020).[8] Over 160 volunteers worked with them as packers and drivers delivering food packages to over 500 families every two weeks (see Figure 3). They collected money, food, and supplies from the Israeli public, communities, businesses, and private donors. The Bialik Rogozin School in South Tel Aviv[9] provided storage and packing space. An information page

[8] Food for the Soul. *Informational Sheet*. Provided on email.

[9] Bialik Rogozin is one of four schools in South Tel Aviv where asylum seekers' children make up the majority of the student population, alongside other migrants' children who live in the area

about the initiative described it as a cooperative of activists, completely voluntary, based within a large community of conscientious citizens (Food for the Soul, 2020).[10]

Yonit, a lead organizer, explained how it developed:

> All our lives came to a halt with the start of Corona. Nature dropped this bomb on all of us. All of us were in shock, distress, and out of work. But the [asylum seeker] kids I had worked with didn't have the most basic line of support. No severance pay for parents, even though they paid taxes, no welfare services.
>
> I looked around and I realized - I have a way to get by, and they don't…. I don't have access to change things within systems or through advocacy, so we had to develop guerrilla methods to help people survive.
>
> We have a commitment not to look away. (Y. Naftali, personal communication, August 2, 2021)

Figure 3: Food for the Soul volunteers collect bags for distribution from Bialik Rogozin School

The work of the Food for the Soul initiative was accompanied by a strong discourse of identity. Volunteers encouraged others to join and solicited donations on their Facebook page through personal

[10] Food for the Soul. *Informational Sheet*. Provided on email

stories highlighting their identities and experiences as motivations for action. For example, one volunteer connected her engagement to a history of Jewish persecution in a video post on the initiative's Facebook page:

> We can't accept this situation. In our own history, we experienced being refugees, seeking asylum. We were confronted with disregard, abuse, and cruelty. These things are happening here and now, and we can't let them be (Food for the Soul, 2021)[11]

Another volunteer encouraged activism based on a community identity and values approach, drawing on Jewish proverbs and tales to explain the need to take action for the asylum seekers:

> People ask why I volunteer here, of all places, citing the Jewish proverb, "your own city's poor come first." And I agree – but these very people are my own city's most impoverished…
>
> There's a tale of Jewish man in Chicago who used to distribute food to African American families during the 1960s.
>
> He was once asked "Why help them? They are not Jewish."
>
> And he responded – "I know they are not Jewish, but I am" (Food for the Soul, 2021)[12]

These testimonials and others embody the identity-based discourse that accompanies the response of many Israelis to the plight of asylum seekers. Yonit explained her actions similarly:

> My motives go back to my grandfather and grandmother who were Holocaust survivors. My mother's two brothers, at six and three years of age, were killed in the Holocaust and no one reached out to help them as the life they knew was being ripped to shreds. This shaped the lives of three generations that followed in unimaginable ways.
>
> But the lesson I draw from this doesn't start at Auschwitz. It started long before – thinking about how people live in a social fabric that dissolves bit by bit.

---

[11] Food for the Soul. (2021, February 27). Facebook Page. https://www.facebook.com/115134487020896/photos/a.131826752018336/207394161128261/

[12] Food for the Soul. (2021, February 27). Facebook Page. https://www.facebook.com/115134487020896/photos/a.131826752018336/207394161128261/

> My grandmother used to tell us how her local store had a sign in the front that stated: 'No Dogs Allowed'. At some point, someone changed the sign to say – 'No Dogs or Jews Allowed.'
>
> No one said anything. None of the neighbors protested or ripped off the sign, while she was forced out. Auschwitz may have delivered the most painful blow, but acts of resistance were needed long before it. (Y. Naftali, personal communication, August 2, 2021).

Mentions of the Holocaust, collective experiences of persecution and Jewish morality and values exemplify the strong identity discourse that accompanied the collective's aid efforts. Activists explained their personal motivations this way and used these discourses to encourage others to join the aid efforts. It appears that the rights discourse and identity discourse blended into each other and were instrumentalized interchangeably to garner support for the cause at hand.

Local Aid Initiatives for Asylum Seekers

While the aid initiatives discussed in the previous section reached thousands of asylum seeker households for the duration of the pandemic, this section describes smaller, local, temporary neighborhood initiatives to provide food aid. It focuses on two case studies: neighborly aid in the city of Herzliya and local organizing for the southern cities of Ashkelon and Ashdod. It argues that these small initiatives hold great potential for resisting state led exclusion based on their geographical spread, the sustainable nature of neighborly relationships, and the discourse of care underpinning them.

A few months into the pandemic, it became clear that many of the more established programs were both overwhelmed with requests and limited in reach to Tel Aviv and a few large cities.[13] Requests for assistance continued to reach organizations and volunteers from asylum seekers around the country. Pleas for help on social media triggered local responses.

In Herzliya, Hannah Raz, a long-time Israeli activist with asylum seekers, became inundated with requests for assistance. She turned to Facebook, asking neighbors and friends for help. Individuals

[13] Most NGOs and community organizations are based in Tel Aviv and were unable to regularly deliver aid to other locations. Food for the Soul provided bi-weekly deliveries of bags of food to Ashkelon, Netanya, and Petah Tikvah. Local initiatives such as the Jerusalem Asylum Seeker Community Center, the Alef initiative in Haifa, and the Negev Center for Refugees in Beer Sheva were able to provide some support to asylum seekers near those cities. However, over half of the asylum seeker population lived outside of Tel Aviv and many remained out of reach of most distribution efforts.

delivered groceries and other necessities to local families and transferred money to them to cover rent or medical needs. Oz Rotbart, a mother of three and an activist living in Herzliya, decided to coordinate a local response. In a Facebook post from October 2020, she explained:

> I can't stop thinking about these families, with empty fridges and cupboards, who live within a 1 km radius from my home. I can't stop thinking about the way my country chooses to treat refugees. So, I started a community collection project. My dream is that people from my community (Herzliya) will add an item, two or three (based on their ability) to their regular shopping, and that these extra items will form packages for asylum seekers based on their needs (O. Rotbart, Facebook Post, October 23, 2020).

Initially, they delivered basic packages to five families in the city. Over time, the packages became bigger and the number of families in need doubled and tripled. Over 130 local Israelis, organized via WhatsApp, dropped off supplies at Oz's house, based on the specific needs of each family. Every two or three weeks, supplies would reach her ceiling and fill her hallways (see, for example, Figures 4 and 5). At that point, five local volunteer drivers would deliver them to families, with the collection cycle beginning anew.

Figure 4: Supplies collected in Oz's storage room

Figure 5: Supplies line Oz's hallway before distribution

In Ashkelon, asylum seekers sought assistance from Israelis on behalf of other asylum seekers. Helen Woldemariam, an Eritrean asylum seeker and mother of three, became one such activist. Seeing

a dire situation of food insecurity unfold around her, Helen made phone calls and searched Facebook for assistance. Since Ashkelon is far from Tel Aviv, they were unable to receive aid from most NGOs located there. They intermittently received limited assistance from the Negev Center for Refugees, which is based in Beer Sheva. Helen was unemployed but her husband continued to work at a local meat shop. She described the situation this way:

> Before the Corona we didn't ask for anything. Everyone was working and they managed on their own. But during Corona the situation was difficult. People had to stay home, sometimes both mother and father, sometimes with four children. It was so hard, they didn't have work, they didn't have food.
>
> People didn't know where to go, or who to ask.
>
> So, I looked on Facebook and I found an Israeli woman that was helping people. I called her and told her we have a problem here; people don't have food. After three days she came with food and after that we organized regular deliveries and connections to people in the area. (H. Woldemariam, personal communication, August 5, 2021)

Helen contacted Israeli activists in other cities through Facebook and maintained contact with 60 families in Ashkelon who were in urgent need of food aid. Helen's request for aid was publicized on social networks, and through the Culture of Solidarity community. Experienced activists from Tel Aviv and Herzliya, Eritrean community activists from southern towns, and newly engaged neighbors from southern Israel (reached through social media) met using Zoom to discuss how to organize assistance in southern Israel. Simultaneously, other southern communities in need surfaced – in Ashdod, Netivot, and Sderot.

Through the new network, ad hoc sources of support emerged to address urgent needs in Ashkelon. A local food donation initiative added several vulnerable asylum-seeking families to their weekly distribution. A Food for the Soul volunteer dropped off 15-20 food packages from Tel Aviv at Helen's home on a bi-weekly basis. A local youth movement chapter coordinated several food drives in the city. Finally, a local Jewish charity invited asylum seekers to take fruits and vegetables from its supply. Together, these various initiatives helped mitigate some of the crisis in Ashkelon.

Helen transformed her home into a food collection and distribution point. She used her Hebrew to secure donations and her Tigrinya to coordinate distribution. When several babies were born during the pandemic, Helen requested help in finding strollers and supplies for the newborns – a call that was answered by several kibbutz communities in the vicinity.

Helen received satisfaction from her work helping others. She said:

> It was good to be able to help my sisters and brothers. Also, there were three Russian families in quarantine that we helped from what we received. It didn't matter Eritrean… Russians… it was good to help.
>
> This was new for me and new for the community. It was good, how people helped us, and how we can help others (H. Woldemariam, personal communication, August 5, 2021).

During the days and weeks that followed the organizing Zoom meeting facilitated by Culture of Solidarity, Eritrean activists in each southern city assessed local needs and created lists for distribution. Individuals residing in a number of kibbutz communities in the south collected food (see, for example, Figure 6), baby supplies, clothes, toys, and money and distributed it to Ashdod, Sderot, and Netivot. Asylum seekers and their Israeli neighbors communicated on city-specific WhatsApp groups. When unemployment was at its peak, these local initiatives were mobilized to provide aid. Neighbors helping neighbors had a positive impact on hundreds of families in Israel's geographic periphery.

Figure 6: Food collection cart at a kibbutz in southern Israel

While, for the most part, prior to COVID-19, connections were lacking in these areas, asylum seeker community activists and Israelis felt a sense of responsibility towards others nearby. Asylum

seekers felt cared for by their neighbors, sometimes for the first time. As Awet Kebedom, an Eritrean activist from Ashdod, said:

> The most important thing for the community is to know that we are not alone, to feel like someone sees us, cares about us, and that takes a little bit of the pressure off (A. Kebedom, Organizers Zoom Meeting, January 21, 2021).

Awet was part of an Eritrean community team in Ashdod that delivered aid to asylum seekers. Together with Kibrom Aman, they coordinated deliveries with Israeli activists. Both Awet and Kibrom continued to work at their jobs throughout the pandemic but also devoted their time and language skills to mobilize assistance for others. Kibrom described how collaborations with Israelis were different during the pandemic:

> We worked together, that was the best thing. Before that I didn't work with Israelis. Organizations sometimes gave us vouchers, and I only helped if they needed a translator.
>
> But when we worked together it worked well, we put everything in the community center, and people could come and take it for themselves (K. Aman, personal communication, March 9, 2021)

That asylum seekers distributed food amongst their peers, in familiar locations, without the presence of Israelis fostered a sense of agency and self-reliance. Individual community members contributed based on their abilities and skills. For example, Awet described how the computer course he had taken and the various skills he had mastered proved to be helpful to his organizing role. He also emphasized the importance of working with Israelis:

> During Corona I was working partially. Many families were barely coping with life and barely surviving. So, I decided to do my part and try to make life a little better. I made a Google form to collect information from the community, a list of people, what they need, how many kids…
>
> The most important thing is to have connections between the community and Israelis, and transparency about how we live in this country and how Israelis see us.

> It's been a long time since we started living here in Israel and there was no connection between the community and Israeli society. They have a one-dimensional image of the community, only what they hear from the media and politicians.
>
> Once we make the connections, the Israeli community will know who we are and how we cope with this difficult situation (A. Kebedom, personal communication, September 15, 2021)

Local aid work was aware of and responsive to the needs of local people and made good use of their skills in helping meet them. Thus, it proved to be very egalitarian. Alongside the discourses of rights and identity, this section demonstrates a new discourse of activism by local communities - a discourse of care. As Oz clearly described in a Facebook post about the initiative:

> We came together as a large group of people who care. People who can't stand by and do nothing. People share from their cupboards, their pockets, their time, and vehicles on a regular basis. We give packages full of food and love to families who live in our city… it gives me hope and reminds me that there are good hearted people around me, with values, who are ready and willing to act for change (O. Rotbart, Facebook Post, December 30, 2020).

Discussion

Israeli civic aid initiatives during the pandemic were unprecedented in scope. Similar to other aid initiatives, the response during the COVID-19 pandemic was informed by both a rights and an identity discourse. Yet, the global crisis also ushered in new kinds of local mutual aid initiatives characterized by a discourse of care. This discourse provides new insights into activism in a crisis.

In normal times, civil society focuses on policy change, education, advocacy, and rights. In contrast, civil action during the pandemic focused on urgent humanitarian needs. Times of emergency are characterized by volatility and sudden change. They also bring with them new opportunities to find commonalities, break down barriers, and overcome differences. Regardless of one's identity, political awareness, or affiliations, anyone can understand what it means to be hungry. Caring about hunger in one's vicinity involves caring about the people who live in it. This is a key difference between civic movements and local aid initiatives. Local aid becomes "far more than delivering food packages to neighbours. These groups (re) generate a sense of community or 'communality' where citizens self-

organize, rebuild social fabric and experience their neighbourhood differently. They create other ways of living and relating to each other" (Pleyers, 2020, p. 301).

In the Israeli case, caring aid efforts by citizens facilitated a greater inclusion of asylum seekers by collaborating with them in local organizing and connecting them to Israelis in their area. Care overcame state attempts to exclude certain groups by strengthening connections between asylum seekers and Israelis. Mutual aid efforts usually rely on motivations characterized by care rather than political or ideological motivations. However, as with other discourses, they can be seen as "a form of activism expressing dissent with the state's response to the pandemic and addressing gaps in this response" (Chevée, 2021, p. 1). Times of crisis and disaster shed light on the state's inadequacy in addressing the needs of marginalized populations. In highlighting the need for alternative forms of support, they also provide opportunities for change. Thus, a crisis can break down pre-existing boundaries and facilitate new connections.

Read within the wider political context, mutual aid can be seen as "a form of political participation and dissent with the way care is administered and managed in society" (Spade, 2020, p. 136). There is a strong communicative, reciprocal aspect to care that involves all interacting parties, such that "whether the needs have been met or not, whether the caregiving was successful or not, there will be some response to the care that has been given" (Tronto, 1998, pp. 16–17). By extending care to asylum seekers who had been systemically excluded from the state, Israeli citizens were able to resist state-led racialized exclusion through neighborly acts of support.

Mutual aid and solidarity are not new trends in Israel. Networks of mutual aid have long existed within the Sudanese and Eritrean communities and were central to community survival through the crisis. Israeli initiatives of mutual aid are also ubiquitous throughout different communities around the country, for different groups and causes. However, this article highlights the exponential growth in the mutual aid projects directed toward African asylum seekers that involved the community during the pandemic. By involving asylum seekers in organizing efforts, local mutual aid initiatives emerged as an egalitarian way to overcome divisions and power imbalances.

Spade (2020) describes mutual aid as a form of "radical collective care" that can stimulate social change and dissent. He explains that during times of crisis the "expanding use of mutual aid

strategies will be the most effective way to support vulnerable populations to survive, mobilize significant resistance, and build the infrastructure we need for the coming disasters" (p. 131). The present case study of local civic response to African asylum seekers in Israel is conceived of as just that – a form of dissent and resistance to government policies of exclusion. Civil society's response during the pandemic entailed concrete practices accompanied by a discursive dimension that confronted exclusionary state practices through acts of solidarity and care.

Local initiatives of help among neighbors emerged as a new and hopeful mode of action, guided by a discourse of care. Observations of how this discourse of care emerged in local aid activities during the COVID-19 pandemic in Israel offer several insights for activism and refugee protection work. First, the accessibility of the care discourse provides a pathway for participation and activism across identity groups, geographic areas, ethnicities, and political affiliations. Second, local aid provision that involves asylum seekers in their organization tends to be more egalitarian. Taken together, local initiatives of aid based on care can foster accessible, egalitarian, sustainable engagements as meaningful counterweights to exclusionary state policies.

While local initiatives among neighbors may appear small in scope or short-lived, I argue that they have the potential to resist exclusion. The practice of local mutual aid and the discourse of care are more accessible and egalitarian. They can produce sustainable relationships and connections in people's everyday lives and localities that last beyond a crisis. Hopeful as this argument may be, it is important to remember the role of the state. Civic initiatives might have been able to mitigate some difficulties caused by the pandemic or help asylum seekers navigate the state's failures and harm to their rights. However, racialized state exclusion remains key to the continued suffering of this group. Hopefully, this study will inspire further research on mutual aid initiatives and strategies for resisting state-led exclusion and power inequalities.

REFERENCES

Afeef, K. F. (2009). *A promised land for refugees? Asylum and migration in Israel* (No. 183; New Issues in Refugee Research). International Peace Research Institute. https://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1002_1261130955_il-unhcr.pdf

Aman, K. (2021, March 9). *Private Correspondence* [Personal communication].

Anteby-Yemini, L. (2015). Between exclusion and inclusion: African asylum seekers in Israeli urban space. In T. Kritzman-Amir (Ed.), *Where Levinsky meets Asmara: Social and legal aspects of Israeli asylum policy* (1st ed., pp. 227–251). Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute.

Anteby-Yemini, L. (2017). African asylum-seekers in Israel: Illegalization, incorporation and race relations. *Hagira*, *7*, 7–20. https://tinyurl.com/2w9893fd

Armenta, A. (2017). Racializing crimmigration: Structural racism, colorblindness, and the institutional production of immigrant criminality. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, *3*(1), 82–95.

ASSAF. (2020). *ASSAF's activities to support asylum seekers during the lockdown imposed in Israel to combat Covid-19 (March-May 2020)*. Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel. https://assaf.org.il/en/sites/default/files/Assaf%27s%20work%20during%20covid-19%20lockdown_0.pdf

Berman, Y. (2015). Arrests of refugees and asylum seekers in Israel. In T. Kritzman-Amir (Ed.), *Where Levinsky meets Asmara: Social and Legal Aspects of Israeli Asylum Policy* (pp. 147–208). Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute.

Berman, Y., & Ziegler, R. (2015). The union of securitisation and demography: Immigration detention in Israel. In A. Nethery & S. J. Silverman (Eds.), *Immigration detention: The migration of a policy and its human impact* (pp. 154–162). Routledge.

Bhatia, M. (2015). Turning asylum seekers into 'dangerous criminals': Experiences of the criminal justice system of those seeking sanctuary. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, *4*(3), 97–111.

Bleichfeld Megnazi, M., Ofir, E., Sertana, G., & Andwalt, R. (2021). *Nutrition and food insecurity among statusless persons in South Tel Aviv*. Ministry of Health, Tel Aviv Municipality and Mesila. https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/alien-food-insecurity-south-tel-aviv/he/files_publications_units_Nutrition_alien-food-insecurity-south-tel-aviv.pdf

Bracha, O. (1998). Unfortunate or perilous: The infiltrators, the law and the Supreme Court 1948-1954. *Tel-Aviv University Law Review ['Iyune mishpat]*, *21*, 333.

Canning, V. (2017). *Gendered harm and structural violence in the British asylum system*. Routledge.

Cerwonka, A., & Malkki, L. H. (2007). *Improvising theory process and temporality in ethnographic fieldwork*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Chevée, A. (2021). Mutual aid in north London during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Social Movement Studies*, *0*(0), 1–7.

Cohen, N. (2015). Southern discomfort: Defensive urban citizenship in Tel Aviv. In T. Matejskova & M. Antonsich (Eds.), *Governing through diversity: Migration societies in post-multiculturalist times* (pp. 161–180). Palgrave Macmillan.

Culture of Solidarity. (2020). *Homepage*. https://www.cultureofsolidarity.com/

Culture of Solidarity. (2021). *January-February 2021 Newsletter*. https://mailchi.mp/0dd10f85682a/53zpygd5o8

De Genova, N. (2018). The "migrant crisis" as racial crisis: Do Black lives matter in Europe? *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *41*(10), 1765–1782.

de Waal, A. (1997). Democratizing the aid encounter in Africa. *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, *73*(4), 623–639.

Food for the Soul. (2020). *Informational Sheet*.

Food for the Soul. (2021, February 27). *Facebook Page*. https://www.facebook.com/115134487020896/photos/a.131826752018336/20739416112826

Forum for Refugees and Asylum Seekers' Organizations in Israel. (2020). *Asylum seekers in Israel left destitute during Covid 19 crisis*. Forum for Refugees and Asylum Seekers' Organizations in Israel. https://assaf.org.il/en/sites/default/files/Asylum%20seekers%20during%20Covid-19%20update%20-%20October%202020.pdf

Forum for Refugees and Asylum Seekers' Organizations in Israel. (2021). *Asylum seekers from Sudan and Eritrea—Situational report*. Forum for Refugees and Asylum Seekers' Organizations in Israel. https://assaf.org.il/en/sites/default/files/Situational%20Report_Feb2021.pdf

Gerver, M. (2017). Paying refugees to leave. *Political Studies*, *65*(3), 631–645.

Ghebrezghiabher H. M. & and Motzafi-Haller, P. (2015) Eritrean women asylum seekers in Israel: From a politics of rescue to feminist accountability. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 28(4),570-594.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Harvard University Press.

Guthmann, A., & Kaufman, N. (2019). *In broad daylight: The Deposit Law implementation and impact*. Hotline for Migrants and Refugees and Worker's Hotline. https://hotline.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Heb-Deposit-Law-Report-HRM-KLO-2019-Web.pdf

Gutzeit, Z., & Shamir, E. (2017). *Painful exclusion: The costs of denying asylum seekers access to healthcare services in Israel, and a proposal for a remedy*. Physicians for Human Rights. http://cdn2.phr.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/painful-exclusion-report-english-phri-2017.pdf

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, *14*(3), 575–599.

Harrell-Bond, B. (2002). Can humanitarian work with refugees be humane? *Human Rights Quarterly*, *24*(1), 51–85.

Held, V. (1993). *Feminist morality: Transforming culture, society, and politics*. University of Chicago Press.

Held, V. (2006). *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*. Oxford University Press.

Hochman, O. (2015). Infiltrators or asylum seekers? Framing and attitudes toward asylum seekers in Israel. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *13*(4),

Hood, J. (2010). Orthodoxy vs. power: The defining traits of grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 151–164). SAGE Publications.

Ilan, S. (2019, May 5). Failure of asylum seeker law: How did 700 million shekels disappear? *Calcalist*. https://www.calcalist.co.il/local/articles/0,7340,L-3761526,00.html

Israel State Comptroller. (2014). *Annual report 2014—Treatment of non-removable foreigners* (Annual Report No. 64C; pp. 59–131). https://www.mevaker.gov.il/he/Reports/Report_248/af07752c-7845-4f1d-ae97-23c45c702624/102-ver-5.pdf

Israel State Comptroller. (2018a). *Annual report 2018—Treatment of non-removable foreigners* (Annual Report No. 68C; pp. 149–186). http://www.mevaker.gov.il/he/Reports/Report_627/8342453f-15f3-493e-bc7f-4ab59199b9dd/103-zarim-1.pdf

Israel State Comptroller. (2018b). *Annual report 2018—Treatment of political asylum requests* (No. 68C; Annual Reports, pp. 1419–1469). http://www.mevaker.gov.il/he/Reports/Report_627/8eaa80a0-a426-4424-aefa-8fdc4e8b176a/221-zarim-2.pdf

Kashti, O. (2021, May 3). 86 percent of Tel Aviv asylum seekers lack food security, first official survey finds. *Haaretz*. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-86-of-tel-aviv-asylum-seekers-lack-food-security-first-official-survey-finds-1.9591915

Kaufman, N. (2017, May 12). Israel's new tactic for forcing out African refugees—Dock their wages. *+972 Magazine*. https://www.972mag.com/israels-new-tactic-for-forcing-out-african-refugees-dock-their-wages/

Kebedom, A. (2021, September 15). *Private Correspondence*.

Kritzman-Amir, T. (2012) Refugees and asylum seekers in the State of Israel. *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs 6*(3), 97–111

Kritzman-Amir, T., & Kemp, A. (2008). Establishing a refugee regime in Israel—Between state and civic Society. In G. Mondlak & M. Ajzenstadt (Eds.), *Power in the judiciary* (pp. 55–90). Tel Aviv University (Hebrew)

Lijnders, L. (2013). Deportation of South Sudanese from Israel. *Forced Migration Review*. https://www.fmreview.org/detention/lijnders

Malkki, L. H. (1996). Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization. *Cultural Anthropology*, *11*(3), 377–404.

Mann, I. (2015). The refugee state. In T. Kritzman-Amir (Ed.), *Where Levinsky meets Asmara: Social and legal aspects of Israeli asylum policy* (pp. 456–492). Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute (Hebrew).

Meer, N., Hill, E., Peace, T., & Villegas, L. (2021). Rethinking refuge in the time of COVID-19. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *44*(5), 864–876.

Mehartzion, A., Gur, Y., Lotan, Z., & Gutzeit, Z. (2017). *Selling my body is all that's left*. Physicians for Human Rights. http://cdn4.phr.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/תופעת-הזנות.pdf

Moscovitz, H. (2016). The mainstreaming of radical right exclusionary ideology: Israeli parliamentary discussions over asylum. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, *21*(2), 140–159.

Moss, D., Gutzeit, Z., Mishori, R., Davidovitch, N., & Filc, D. (2019). Ensuring migrants' right to health? Case of undocumented children in Israel. *BMJ Pediatrics Open*, *3*(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjpo-2019-000490

Mountz, A. (2020). *The death of asylum: Hidden geographies of the enforcement archipelago*. University of Minnesota Press.

Mukumbang, F. C., Ambe, A. N., & Adebiyi, B. O. (2020). Unspoken inequality: How COVID-19 has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities of asylum-seekers, refugees, and undocumented migrants in South Africa. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, *19*(1), 141.

Naftali, Y. (2021, August 2). *Private Correspondence*.

Organizers' Zoom Meeting. (2021, January 21). *Mobilizing local aid for asylum seekers in southern Israel*.

Orr, Z., & Ajzenstadt, M. (2020). Beyond control: The criminalization of African asylum seekers in Israel. *International Review of Sociology*, *30*(1), 142–165.

Paz, Y. (2011). *Ordered disorder: African asylum seekers in Israel and discursive challenges to an emerging refugee regime*. UNHCR, Policy Development and Evaluation Service. http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4d7e19ab2.pdf

Pleyers, G. (2020). The pandemic is a battlefield. Social movements in the COVID-19 lockdown. *Journal of Civil Society*, *16*(4), 295–312.

Population and Immigration Authority. (2020). *Data on foreigners in Israel 2020* [Quarterly Report]. https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/foreign_workers_stats_q3_2020/he/ZARIM-2020.pdf

Ram, M., & Yacobi, H. (2012). African asylum seekers and the changing politics of memory in Israel. In I. Glynn & J. O. Kleist (Eds.), *History, memory and migration: Perceptions of the past and the politics of incorporation* (pp. 154–170). Palgrave Macmillan.

Rosenberg Rubins, R. (2019). Crimmigration as population management in the "control society." *New Criminal Law Review*, *22*(3), 236–300.

Rosenhek, Z. (2011). Dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the Israeli welfare state: State-building and political economy. In G. Ben-Porat & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *The contradictions of Israeli citizenship: Land, religion, and state*. Routledge.

Rotbart, O. (2020, October 23, December 30). *Facebook Page*.

Rozen, S., Abbo, S., & Paskay, S. (2020). *Trapped in limbo: Israel's policy of avoiding making decisions on well-founded asylum claims*. Hotline for Migrants and Refugees. https://hotline.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/trapped-in-limbo-pdf-final-021220-1.pdf

Rubinstein, A., Orgad, L., & Avineri, S. (2009). *Managing global migration: A strategy for immigration policy in Israel* (R. Gavison, Ed.). Metzila. http://www.metzilah.org.il/webfiles/fck/file/Immigration_Book%202.pdf

Sadan, H., Rozen, S., & Guthmann, A. (2018). *Languishing in line: The queues at the PIBA Office in Bnei Brak in early 2018*. Hotline for Refugees and Migrants. https://hotline.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Eng-WEB-Lines-Report-HRM-2018.pdf

Scheiner, A. (2019). Weakening aspects of Israeli Aid Organization's Discourse on African Migrants. In Galia Sabar and Efrat Shir (eds.) *Life Seekers: Eritreans, Sudanese, and Israelis in Shared Spaces.* Pardes [Hebrew].

Sevenhuijsen, S. (1998). *Citizenship and the ethics of care: Feminist considerations on justice, morality, and politics*. Routledge.

Shamur, T. (2018). Melancholic citizenship in the south Tel Aviv protest against global migration. *Citizenship Studies*, *22*(3), 259–277.

Sitrin, M. (2020). Introduction. In M. Sitrin, C. Sembrar, & R. Solnit (Eds.), *Pandemic solidarity: Mutual aid during the Covid-19 crisis*. Pluto Press.

Spade, D. (2020). Solidarity not charity: Mutual aid for mobilization and survival. *Social Text*, *38*(1 (142)), 131–151.

The Garden Library. (2021). *Garden Library work during Covid* [personal communication].

The Source. (2020, June 19). State sponsored humiliation (No. 8). In *The Source*. Channel 13. https://13tv.co.il/item/news/hamakor/season-18/episodes/ws2is-2031943/

Tronto, J. C. (1993). *Moral boundaries: A political argument for an ethic of care*. Routledge.

Tronto, J. C. (1998). An ethic of care. *Generations: Journal of the American Society on Aging*, *22*(3), 15–20.

Tronto, J. C., & Fisher, B. (1990). Toward a feminist theory of caring. In E. Abel & M. Nelson (Eds.), *Circles of care* (pp. 36–54). SUNY Press.

Weinblum, S. (2019). Conflicting imaginaries of the border: The construction of African asylum seekers in the Israeli political discourse. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, *34*(5), 699–715.

Willen, S. S. (2010). Darfur through a Shoah lens: Sudanese asylum seekers, unruly biopolitical dramas, and the politics of humanitarian compassion in Israel. In S. Lloyd, M.-J. DelVecchio Good, S. S. Willen, M. M. J. Fischer, & B. J. Good (Eds.), *A reader in medical anthropology: Theoretical trajectories, emergent realities* (Vol. 17, pp. 505–521). Wiley-Blackwell.

Willen, S. S. (2019). *Fighting for dignity: Migrant lives at Israel's margins*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Woldemariam, H. (2021, August 5). *Private Correspondence*.

Yaron, L. (2018, April 17). Despite no deal With African countries, Israel still tells asylum seekers to leave for Uganda or Rwanda. *Haaretz*. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-despite-no-deal-israel-tells-asylum-seekers-to-leave-for-uganda-1.6009154

Yaron Mesegna, H., & Ramati, O. (2017). Where time stands still: Holot Detention Facility and the Israeli Anti-Infiltration Law. *Hagira*, *7*, 67–83. https://tinyurl.com/2p8uvykc

Ziegler, R. R. (2015). In the land of hidden legislative aims: HCJ 8665/14 (detention of asylum-seekers in Israel- round 3) [Cardozo Law School]. *Versa: Opinions of the Supreme Court of Israel*. http://versa.cardozo.yu.edu/viewpoints/land-hidden-legislative-aims-hcj-866514-detention-asylum-seekers-israel-round-3