

"Suitable Accommodation" for Agricultural and Home-Care Migrants Before and After COVID-19

Yahel Kurlander and Idit Zimmerman

Abstract

Israel's Foreign Workers' Law (1991) stipulates a number of conditions for employing a foreign worker, including the employer's obligation to provide, at his/her expense, "suitable accommodation" for the worker. This study examines and compares the accommodation conditions for agricultural and long-term home care migrant workers in Israel before and after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. A comparative look at the short-term policy responses (April to December 2020) between the two sectors, along with empirical data from employers regarding accommodations, reveals the shared logic that animates the Israeli labor migration regime – that of the instrumental treatment of migrant workers. The study identifies structural fault lines in the regulation of accommodations in these two sectors that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and led, in some cases, to increased labor market exploitation that may amount to human trafficking.

Keywords: migrant workers, care, agriculture, accommodation, human trafficking, COVID-19.

Filipino Migrant Caregivers in Israel during COVID-19: Enhancing Communal Social Capital via Facebook

Deby Babis and Galia Sabar

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has differentially affected citizens and non-citizens, both asylum seekers and migrant workers, worldwide. We explore how the Filipino caregiver migrant community in Israel used social media to cope with the unique challenges its members faced during the first months of the pandemic. Based on digital ethnography on Facebook and interviews, our findings reveal that these challenges included loss of their jobs with no government support, loss of their day off and the ability to meet other Filipino caregivers in person, limited access to information on COVID-19 relevant to Israel and potential loss of their visa after giving birth. To cope with these challenges, they utilized Facebook to (1) manage self-help philanthropic campaigns assisting the needy; (2) organize digital communal events, enabling isolated Filipino caregivers to be actively involved; (3) provide information on COVID-19 in Israel and in the Filipino community and (4) create a communal operation to send babies to the Philippines to obey regulations concerning migrant women who gave birth. While complying with strict lockdown and social distancing regulations, the Filipino caregiver community developed new modalities of conduct via social media platforms and cultivated online communal social capital, which expanded the well-established social capital that already existed in the community.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic; social capital; migrant workers; Filipinos; Israel

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

**Attitudes of the Israeli public toward labor migrants and asylum seekers during COVID-19:
Feelings of threat and willingness to grant health rights**

Karin Amit and Svetlana Chachashvili-Bolotin

Abstract

The present study examines the attitudes of the Israeli public toward labor migrants and asylum seekers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It explores the Israeli public's perceptions about the threats posed by labor migrants and asylum seekers based on economic, social and national grounds as well as perceived threats to public health during this challenging period.

The study examines the willingness of the Israeli public to grant healthcare rights to these immigrants, as a result of the perceptions about the threats they posed at the socio-economic, national, and health levels. The study is based on data from an online survey conducted in April-May 2020 during the first wave of the pandemic among a representative sample of the adult Israeli population that included 624 participants (504 Jews and 120 Arabs). The findings reveal that the Israeli public in general, both Jewish and Arab, feel more threatened economically, socially, nationally and health-wise by asylum seekers than by labor migrants. They also indicate that the Israeli public is more inclined to grant healthcare rights to labor migrants than to asylum seekers. Finally, as perceptions about the threats posed by migrants increase, the willingness to grant them healthcare rights decreases. The findings of this study join other current studies indicating a radicalization of attitudes towards immigrants in general and especially toward asylum seekers during periods of economic crisis such as the COVID-19 period.

Keywords: attitudes towards migrants, asylum seekers, labor migrants, perceptions of threat

Asylum Seekers in Israel during COVID-19: Characteristics, Needs and Sources of Help

Abstract

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Asylum seekers in Israel were particularly vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, even compared to migrant workers who had permits. The latter were employed in sectors that were considered essential and had some mandatory protection as part of their employment. During lockdowns, asylum seekers suffered from food insecurity, the inability to pay rent and intensified difficulties in all areas of life. In response to the crisis, the Center for International Migration and Integration (CIMI) was part of a cash assistance project. The contact with the population of asylum seekers enabled CIMI to systematically assess their condition during the crisis. The article reports on the findings of a phone survey conducted in November-December 2020 among 214 respondents who received cash assistance. Findings illustrate their most important needs and their sources of help and information, and whether and how they were connected to socio-demographic characteristics. Although these migrants' needs intensified during the COVID-19 crisis, they are, in fact, part of an ongoing reality. The article concludes with a call for suitable interventions that can improve these migrants' ability to navigate the Israeli system to seek help and build resilience among asylum seeker communities in facing the constant crisis of their life in Israel.

Key words: COVID-19 crisis, asylum seekers, crisis-response, urgent needs, sources of help and information