



התאחדות ישראל ליהודים אתיופיים
ISRAEL ASSOCIATION FOR ETHIOPIAN JEWS
התאגדות חסותית לרווחה ופיתוח

Activities of Law Enforcement for Youths at Risk from the Ethiopian Israeli community

Introduction

The IAEJ has collected and mapped out governmental plans designed to address at-risk Ethiopian-Israeli community; specifically from the law enforcement, the relevant government departments (Education, Social Services, Immigrant Absorption), local civic authorities, and non-profit work in the field. Some of these plans are directly focused on at-risk youth from the community, the majority are directed towards a larger group (all new immigrants or all youth defined as at-risk). A report on this subject will be presented in August 2007. This document is a report and its concern is only with those initiatives from the law-enforcement authorities that begins with distressing statistics revealing a gradually growing crime-rate amongst Ethiopian youth in the past years.

Target Population

In this document, the term *at-risk youth*, refers only to those youth of Ethiopian Israelis involved in criminal acts or reside in and around areas where the youth crime-rate is high and parallels the activities of the law-enforcement authorities.



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Findings

Criminal Files Opened for Ethiopian Israeli Youth in the years 1996-2005

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
No. of Files Involving Ethiopian Israelis	139	220	319	439	470	478	603	776	963	9
% of Ethiopian Files, of all Youth Criminal Files	1.2%	2%	2.5%	3.2%	3.3%	3.2%	3.9%	3%	4%	3.8
% of Ethiopian Immigrants, of the Country's Youth Population	1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%				2

(Youth Section, Israel Police, 2007)

Limitations of the Police Data

1. Data refers only to youth immigrants from 1990. The police do not have information on the Ethiopian Israeli community that were born in Israel.
2. The data represents only those cases when criminal records were opened. Since first-time minor offenders are often subject to a policy of non-prosecution, the true number of youth involved in patterns of criminal activity is significantly higher.



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3. The data presents the number of files opened for Ethiopian Israeli youths. According to the data, that one youth will have numerous criminal files, or, alternatively, that a number of youths will have only one file.
4. An increase or decrease in the number of criminal files may result from different reasons, such as heightened or decreased enforcement (as, for example, in 2005 police were allocated to a disengagement process – ‘the Hitnatkut’ – which may partially explain the decrease in criminal records, when compared to 2004).

Despite data limitations, it can be seen that the number of criminal records which involve Ethiopian youth is steadily rising, which is a very worrisome fact. The gravity of these findings is evident in light of the general population of immigrant youth. In 2005, 16,700 of immigrants from Ethiopia born in 2005 were aged 10-19;¹ they constituted 2% of all Jewish youth in Israel in that age group. The total youth group numbered 834,900 (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], Statistical Abstract of Israel 2006). The percentage of youth with criminal records who had emigrated from Ethiopia was 3.86% (903 records). In other words, the percentage of those with criminal records of Ethiopian Israelis of all records was nearly twice the rate of that among all youth aged 10-19. It must be kept in mind that this data refers only to those who had emigrated from Ethiopia and not those who were born in Israel.

The steady increase in the number of young adults from Ethiopia who have criminal records in various areas of crime:

Criminal Files Involving Israeli Youth from Ethiopia:

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
Violence	47	59	100	137	192	205	220	215	207	
Sex	2	9	6	16	11	10	11	14	18	
Drugs	1	7	27	36	35	49	58	84	114	
Property	89	144	184	247	231	208	310	361	417	

(Youth Section, Israel Police, 2007)

¹ In the years preceding the 1990 immigration the number of immigrants was low. The children who had immigrated in 1984 are not included in the group being analyzed.



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The CBS data as well, serves to prove that the crime rate is highest among Ethiopian immigrants among Israeli-born children, criminal records were opened for 19 out of 1000 12-20 year c immigrants it is 2.42 times the number, and stands at 46 to each 1000. These are followed by the ex-Soviet Union, with 39 out of 1000.

12-20 Year Olds, According to Country of Birth and Possession of Criminal Record (CBS Record Holders Aged 12-20, 4.12.06)

Country of Birth	Population	With Criminal Record	Rate in 1000
	Total	Total	
Total	1,110,227	23,277	21
Israel	955,233	17,800	19
Abroad – Total	155,044	5,477	35
Thereof: Former USSR	114,273	4,441	39
Ethiopia	13,154	603	46
Other Immigrants	27,617	433	16

This data relates to the findings that point to the high rate of underage prisoners from the community.



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Immigrant Minor Prisoners, by Age and Origin (number & percent)

	Year				
	2002	2004	2005	2006	
				Numbers	Percent of all Jewish Minor Prisoners
Total Immigrant Minor Prisoners	26	41	56	55 (out of 139 underaged prisoners)	39.5
Thereof:					
Age					
Up to 16	5	12	12	12	28.6
16-18	21	29	44	43	44.3
Origin					
Former USSR *	12	22	38	37	26.6
Ethiopia **	6	12	12	14	10.1
Other Immigrants	8	7	6	4	2.9

* Immigrants from the Former USSR since 1989.

** Immigrants from Ethiopia in all the years

(Israel Prison Service, Planning Division, different years. In: **Child Immigrants in Israel**, 2007
Immigrant Absorption and Israel National Council for the Child)



The severity of these statistics regarding the rate of minor prisoners from Ethiopian background in light of their percentage of the entire population of immigrant minors. Again, in the year 2006, 200 immigrants from Ethiopia in the years 1990-2005 were aged 10-19², and they represented 10.1% of children in Israel in the same age group. In 2005, the latter numbered 834,900 (CBS, Statistical Authority of Israel 2006). In the year 2006, the rate of minor prisoners of Ethiopian background was 10.1%, which is five times the rate of youth aged 10-19.³

Law-Enforcement Authorities' Methods of Dealing with At-Risk Ethiopian-Israeli Youth

Here we consider those activities in which the police and the Ministry of Public Security are involved, and initiatives in which they play a leading part. First, we will present activities of a preventive nature:

- (1) The METZILAH: Community and Crime Prevention program, led by Ministry of Public Security
- (2) The Community and Civil Guard Wing of the Police

After this, we will present the activities of the police's Youth Section, designed to address enforcement.

a. Ministry of Public Security – METZILAH: Community and Crime Prevention:

The Ministry of Public Security conducts activities in the communities through the Community Crime Prevention Division (METZILAH). The division aims to battle different forms of violence, by working with local residents and local authority organizations. The project offers a number of plans for the entire population. The programs cater to the specific needs of each community, alongside a common framework and models of community intervention that are identical for all the communities.

The *IAEJ* contacted METZILAH requesting to know whether there are any programs that address Ethiopian-Israeli youth. As far as we know at this time, activities which specifically address Ethiopian immigrant communities only take place in the towns of Beer Sheva, Yavneh, Netivot, and Akron. In these towns most of the activities focus on the community's youth population, and

² In the years before 1990 (I.e. 1984-1989), the number of immigrants to Israel were small. The children born in 1983-1984 are not included in the group examined for minor prisoners.

³ As can be seen, the percent of Ethiopian immigrants of the whole youth population refers to the year 2005, while the measure against the entire Jewish minor prisoner population refers to the year 2006. This gap does not matter as the numerical difference in the two years is negligible. Moreover, sampling errors must be taken into account as the samples are a very small number of cases.



target the needs of youth defined as *at-risk*. Most of this activity focuses on developing skills self-empowerment.

The Ministry of Public Security is also a partner in "City Without Violence." The project is designed to reduce violence by establishing an urban foundation and by developing a civic model according to existing program functions so far in Eilat, and it is planned to extend to nine additional cities. The Civil Guard Dept. (AKAM) is meant to design plans which will provide for the immigrant population with Staff Sergeant Major Idit Oz, Prevention & Partnership Section, AKAM 24 Jul. '07).

b. Community & Civil Guard Department

Israel Police crime prevention activities function within Community Policing department, under the command of Commander Eran Israel, Community & Civil Guard Dept. (AKAM). Superintendent Meira is in charge of crime prevention among youth and is under the charge of Chief Superintendent Orit & Partnership Section.

AKAM activities provide initiatives for youth, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Absorption, METZILAH, local authorities and more.

Although there is awareness in AKAM of the necessity to directly respond to the needs of the community in general, and the youth of this group, in particular, there is no clearly designed activity that addresses these needs directly and appropriately. In the past, in the years 1997-2000, one of the Ethiopian Israeli community served as a liaison officer for Ethiopian immigrants.

Currently, activity at the national level is limited primarily to guidance for the community police across the country (Conversation with Chief Superintendent Noga Rogel, until recently superintendent of crime prevention, 7 Nov. '06). A perennial program has been developed that will enable police to deal with cultural differences between the veteran Israeli society and the various immigrant groups with Chief Superintendent Orit Deka. 26 Feb. '07. A conversation with Staff Sergeant Major revealed that this plan has yet to be implemented).

Activities tailored to the needs of Ethiopian immigrant youth come from local initiatives, in the community policing stations; in different places, commanding officers have found that in neighborhoods with a high concentration of Ethiopian immigrants, establishing a local community police is necessary. Such an initiative is the choice to place a police officer in Kiryat-Moshe neighborhood.



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neighborhood with a high percentage of Ethiopian immigrant residence. Alongside the official NCO, Chief Inspector Shimshon Kavda. The decision to deploy these two policemen – both Ethiopian Israeli community – to this neighborhood came in response to the sharp increase primarily youth crime and crimes of violence and property. According to Chief Inspector Elyakim Officer in Shephelah district (20 Sep. '06), thanks to the involvement of Chief Inspector in this neighborhood, relations with the community were improved dramatically. Furthermore, Chief Inspector's presence helped to change the relationship of the local youth with the police that had previously been filled, and restricted to areas of law-enforcement. These activities contributed to the decrease in crime among the neighborhood youth.

c. Enforcement

Activities in the area of law-transgressing youth is under the authority of the Youth Section, under the supervision of Superintendent Alon Grossman, Investigations & Intelligence Dept. Inspector Efrat **Velach** serves as the Special Sectors Officer.

The Youth Section partners with social organizations and local social services in programs designed to address adolescent criminality. The activities that take place are not solely for at-risk youth from the immigrant community, nor for immigrant youth. Nevertheless, there are attempts to address the specific needs and difficulties of immigrant youth, among these Ethiopian immigrants. Among the programs that can assist at-risk Ethiopian immigrant youth are the following:

- (1) **A.D.V. Project** (Alcohol, Drugs, Violence) – project that is both interdisciplinary and community-based, designed to prevent the use of alcohol, drugs and violence among children and adolescents.
- (2) **Family Discussion Group** – for criminal youth – an alternative to being put on trial, in which the youth who committed the offense and a circle of supportive family members meet with the victim and his family. This meeting both enables some of the damage to be repaired, and assists in the offending youth's rehabilitation. This program functions in the immigrant community.
- (3) **Child Protection Center** – the center provides the child victim of sexual abuse with a single location in which all the necessary facilities of investigation, diagnosis and care are housed. At this time, the program functions in Jerusalem. Additional centers are being opened in the near future. In many cases, immigrants struggle to understand the process of diagnosis and care. This program addresses these difficulties.
- (4) **SIKUYIM** [Chances] – A unique program for immigrant adolescents (aged 12-18) who, after committing a criminal offense, in a process of non-prosecution or with a criminal record, are in contact with the police, those youths are referred to the care of the program.



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chaperone. The referral is made by the Exam Board and it is designed to prevent further decline. The goal of this activity is achieved through one-on-one work alongside group meetings. The ability of this plan to assist youth from the community emerges, among other factors, as it bridges the gap created between their child and provides information otherwise unavailable to them. At this point, the program focuses on the Ethiopian immigrant population only takes place in Netanya. So far, there were 34 participants in the Netanya program, 22 of whom have not committed crimes (Conversation with Nathan Godo, Sikuyim Project Coordinator in Netanya,

Apart from involvement in the above listed programs, the Youth Section conducts periodic programs for the Youth Officers. These programs include a concentration on specialized sectors.

Summary and Recommendations

This worrisome data, as listed above, demands a more wide-spread and focused consideration of at-risk youths from the Ethiopian immigrant community. By this we refer to the necessity of measures that will bridge the cultural gaps and the problems particular to this group. Such measures are needed in those communities where the number of Ethiopian Israeli adolescents with criminal records and/or their rate in relation to the number of adolescent criminal records in general in their community. For this, the cooperation of all the bodies responsible and a pooling of resources is required in those communities where a program that focuses on at-risk youth from the Ethiopian immigrant community is necessary, are the following:

Town	Total No. of Criminal Records	Thereof: Percent of Ethiopian Israeli Youth	No. of Ethiopian Israeli Criminal Files
Rehovot	225	52.4	118
Hadera	290	29.0	84
Haifa	514	15.0	77
Netanya	159	31.4	50
Ashdod	176	25.0	44
Ramleh	58	55.2	32
Yavneh	47	59.6	28
Beer Sheva	236	11.4	27
Gadera	23	91.3	20



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(Israel Police, National Headquarters, Statistics Dept., 2006. **Child Immigrants in Israel**, 200 Immigrant Absorption and Israel National Council for the Child)

As already mentioned, crime-preventive activities tailored to Ethiopian-Israeli youth takes place in Beer Sheva, Yavneh, Netanya, and Kiryat Akron, as far as we know at this time. Further enforcement, it is worth examining, developing, and expanding activities which concentrate on youth, activities which could aid those among them accused of criminal activity.

Written:

Moshe Shette

Strategic Research, Planning and Analysis
Unit
Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews
Tel.: 02-6789673 (ext. 103)
Email: mosheshette@iaej.co.il

Tal Haas

Chair, Strategic Research, Planning and Analysis
Unit
Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews
Tel.: 02-6789673 (ext. 102)
Email: tal@iaej.co.il