



For Immediate Release

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Contact:

Ron Halber, JCRC, 301-770-0881

THE JCRC OF GREATER WASHINGTON URGES THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO SUSPEND PLAN TO DEPORT ERITREAN AND SUDANESE ASYLUM SEEKERS

Washington, D.C. – In response to the Israeli government beginning to issue deportation orders to 20,000 individual Sudanese and Eritrean asylum seekers out of the approximately 35,000-40,000 currently living in Israel, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington issued the following statement:

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Greater Washington recognizes the right of every nation, including Israel, to protect its borders and ensure the safety and well-being of its people. Israel has unique security concerns and the challenge of maintaining its dual identities as both the Jewish homeland and a democratic state. Balancing these interests is no easy task.

The history of the Jewish people is replete with expulsion, displacement, and flight from persecution. That legacy has compelled Israel to open its doors to non-Jewish victims of genocide and human rights abuses at various periods since its founding, as it did with the Vietnamese refugees in the late 1970s and those from the Balkans decades later.

Our shared Jewish history and commitment to Israel's own democratic and Jewish values compels us to join our national colleagues at the [Jewish Council for Public Affairs \(JCPA\)](#) in speaking out about the Israeli government's announced plan to summarily deport tens of thousands of Sudanese and Eritrean individuals seeking asylum who entered Israel between 2007 and 2012. We are encouraged by [reports](#) that Israel is in negotiations with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees to resettle a portion of these Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers in third countries deemed by the UN to be "safe" in exchange for granting some of the refugees permanent residency in Israel.

We urge the Israeli government to suspend its current plan to deport these Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers, and to develop a comprehensive asylum determination process that complies with Israel's obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention. This process should be in line with the current asylum-seeker policies of other Western democracies, and should do its best to safeguard these asylum seekers' human dignity and rights. We believe such a policy would further Israel's security and honor its founding values as a compassionate, Jewish, and democratic state.

A strategically and morally sound refugee and asylum policy for any country should include:

- A transparent and efficient system for processing asylum applications so that claims are resolved in a fair and timely manner
- Grants of temporary status to ensure asylum seekers' basic safety, stability, and dignity, including the ability to work legally and gainfully.
- Minimum standards for education, health, and welfare services for these asylum seekers.

Finally, we urge the Israeli government to guarantee that any resettlement to third countries involve only those nations that are truly capable of and willing to absorb these individuals and ensure their long-term safety and status pursuant to international conventions.