

Israel's Policy on Ukrainian Refugees Reveals Its Odious Racism

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As the Russia-Ukraine war enters its third week, and the number of Ukrainian immigrants has increased under the strain of war, Israel is witnessing sharp differences between one group that supports the reception of all immigrants and another that supports accepting only Jewish ones. A third group warns against dispersing the efforts of preserving the state's so-called "ethnic purity".

Meanwhile, this growing dispute within the Israeli government indicates a state of divergence on the Israeli vision of the ongoing war and the lack of consensus on its position. There is a division between those who reject the Russian invasion, those who consider that this position may incur Israel considerable prices and a third group that calls for a total alignment with the West.

When the war between Ukraine and Russia becomes bloodier, Israel is preparing for new waves of Jewish immigration from Ukraine. The population of the Jewish community in Ukraine is 48,000, and the Israeli government started to realise the need to prepare for the increase in applications to immigrate to Israel. These waves of migrations began to be organised by the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, the Ministries of Immigration, Foreign Affairs and Diaspora, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the prime minister's office to communicate between Jews and their families in the former Soviet Union. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, 6,000 new Jewish immigrants from Ukraine have immigrated to Israel.

In 2021, 3,080 new Jewish immigrants immigrated to Israel from Ukraine, but due to the war between Russia and Ukraine, Jewish immigration officials believe there will be a dramatic increase in the applications of migration requests by Ukrainian Jews. The Ministry of Aliyah and Integration stated a rise of 12 per cent in applications to open migration files, and the numbers are expected to increase further.

The Israeli currents that support receiving Ukrainian refugees claim that [Israel is the](#)

[protector of every Jew wherever they may be](#). Therefore, hundreds of Israelis in Ukraine assist at a field hospital on the border. Every day, 12 to 16 flights from Russia and the countries around Ukraine land at Ben Gurion Airport. It is expected that around 2,000 to 3,000 immigrants may arrive, besides those entitled to the racist “law of return”, specific to Jews and Jews alone.

The group with reservations about the comprehensive [reception of refugees from Ukraine](#) called for a ministerial committee to form a clear immigration policy for Israel to adapt to the situation and set parameters on the number of refugees received. So far, Israel does not have a specific and clear immigration policy, and the Ukrainian refugee crisis necessitates a governmental decision based on an agreement between the different components of the government. They do not agree on the current situation, but rather seem indifferent to what they call a “humanitarian disaster”.

A third Israeli current considers the request to implement a plan for refugees as “shameful” because it distorts Israel’s reputation and undermines its immigration policy since it cannot afford the cost of receiving refugees coming from Ukraine. This prompted hundreds of demonstrators to protest in front of the home of the [Minister of Interior Ayelet Shaked](#), accusing her of discriminating between refugees according to religion, race and gender. This group believes that any government’s discrimination based on these grounds is shameful.

This Israeli racist policy towards Ukrainian refugees, compared with other policies regarding immigrants coming from other countries such as Ethiopia, has caused all ministers of the government to be accused of committing a “scandal” and causing a “disgrace” to Israel because they have demonstrated a racist policy separating Jews from others.

It is clear that Israel, the country that cared about its citizens in Ukraine and the Jews there, has closed its doors to victims more than any other country has. Israel has remained silent, turned its back and closed its doors. The world will not forget Israel’s silence. There will come a day when the world will hold Israel accountable because it has evaded punishment for its endless occupation.

Being aware of the Israeli concern about the Jews impresses those described as “lovers of the Jewish race”. But when the war refugees arrive at the Israeli airport and are requested to deposit a huge amount of money to experience freedom and security, it is evident that something in the Israeli conscience is completely distorted. Is there really a difference between a child from Ukraine who fled to search for security and safety, who does not have a Jewish grandmother, and a child from Ukraine who has a Jewish grandmother? What is the difference? [Racism](#).

The Israelis fear that Ukrainian refugees will face personal difficulties, health conditions and other difficulties in Israel, such as not speaking Hebrew or understanding Israeli mentality and culture. As a result, Israeli studies reveal an increase in the diagnosis of depression among Jewish immigrants, and even suicide cases, prompting the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration to launch a health centre to deal with this. Based at the centre are mental health specialists, operating five days a week, offering services in five different languages: English, French, Spanish, Amharic and Russian.

At the same time, recent days have revealed that Israeli human trafficking networks are actively working to lure Ukrainian women and girls to work in prostitution under the guise of

receiving them as refugees. The trafficking networks are based at Ben Gurion Airport and nearby hotels designated by the authorities to host refugees.

During their testimonies at Ben Gurion Airport, about a hundred female Ukrainian refugees mentioned that people offered them money to help flee the war areas in Ukraine. The women crossed the border and boarded a plane heading to Israel. However, upon their arrival, the same people informed the women that they would be forced to provide sexual or domestic services to pay back the money.

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