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1 March 2010

ISR103379.E

Israel: The treatment of immigrant children from the former Soviet Union (FSU), including government response; whether there is an ombudsman for immigrant children from the FSU, including the associated complaints procedure
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information on the treatment of immigrant children from the former Soviet Union (FSU) was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, the Israel National Council for the Child (NCC), an organization that advocates for children in Israel, including immigrant children from the FSU, states on its website that immigrant families and their children are "often misunderstood and mistreated, and lacking the information and skills needed to deal with their problems" (n.d.).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the NCC provided the following information on government response to the treatment of immigrant children from the FSU:

The government has a number of ways for dealing with issues concerning immigrant children ranging from the ... Ministry for Immigrant Absorption that carries out ... activities for assistance and provides immigrant coordinators and additional services. In other government offices as well, such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs, special divisions care for immigrant children. (31 Jan. 2010)

The NCC Representative also provided details on its in-house Ombudsman for Children and Youth, emphasizing that it "is not a government office" and "not established by statute":

The National Council for the Child Ombudsman for Children and Youth, in operation for 20 years, answers approximately 10,000 requests for assistance annually on a wide range of subjects. To make it easier for immigrant children and their families, a special Ombudsman unit for immigrant children from the FSU was established many years ago. ...

The unit is coordinated by an experienced professional, an immigrant from the FSU herself, who speaks Russian and is very familiar with the special problems of this population.

The treatment of the requests is carried out on an individual level (ranging from providing advice to intervention with the school, the municipalities, government

offices, and others) and on the macro level through policy. When there is a call or an accumulation of calls that indicate a wider phenomenon, the other Centers of the NCC are utilized to treat the problem. These include the NCC Center for the Child and the Law (from legal advice to submitting a petition to the courts) or the Knesset Lobby for Children (from a discussion in Knesset committees to change in legislation).

We are able to bring about a solution to the problem for many of the calls simply due to our reputation or our wide connections, but sometimes a difficult and long-lasting battle is necessary to reach a solution and sometimes, unfortunately, a solution is not reached. (31 Jan. 2010)

In a report submitted to the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council, the government of Israel corroborates that the NCC has an Ombudsman for Children and Youth and assists children from the FSU (25 Sept. 2008, 9).

The New Israel Fund (NIF), a funding organization established in 1979, which focuses on "social justice and equality for all Israelis" (n.d.a), provides information which may be of interest. SHATIL, part of the NIF, provides support to non-profit organizations and projects (NIF n.d.b), including a project called "Back from the Edge" (NIF 14 July 2009). "Back from the Edge" assists immigrant youth-at-risk, including youth from the FSU (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

The Israel National Council for the Child (NCC). 31 January 2010. Correspondence with a representative.

_____. N.d. "On the Agenda." <http://www.children.org.il/centers_eng.asp?id=58> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2010]

New Israel Fund (NIF). 14 July 2009. "Back from the Edge: A Miracle for a Russian Immigrant in Lod." <<http://www.nif.org/issue-areas/stories/back-from-the-edge-a-miracle.html>> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2010]

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United Nations (UN). 25 September 2008. Human Rights Council. "Israel." *National Report Submitted in Accordance with Paragraph 15(A) of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1. (A/HRC/WG.6/3/ISR/1)* <http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session3/IL/A_HRC_WG6_3_ISR_1_Israel_E.pdf> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2010]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact an official from the State Comptroller and Ombudsman of Israel and representatives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), Israeli Association for Immigrant Children, New Israel Fund (NIF) and One to One Children's Fund were unsuccessful. The Knesset Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs was unable to provide information.

Internet sites, including: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Freedom House, *Haaretz* [Tel Aviv], Human Rights Watch, Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), Kav LaOved, Knesset Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs, Metropolis International, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, Ministry of Justice, Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, United States (US) Department of State.

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