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RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		7 June 2007
About the Board	ISR102548.E	
Biographies		
Organization Chart	Israel: Whether there has been an amendment to the military service law; if yes, whether the law is more open/flexible with respect to conscientious objectors; what the law states with respect to conscientious objectors	
Employment		
Legal and Policy	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
References		
Publications	No information on whether there has been an amendment to the military service law could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, according to <i>The Jerusalem Post</i> , the Israeli cabinet voted on 18 February 2007 to extend the Tal Law by five years (19 Feb. 2007; see also <i>ibid.</i> 17 May 2006; AP 11 May 2006). The Tal Law allows for the exemption of ultra-Orthodox men from military service in order to pursue religious studies (AP 11 May 2006). Specifically, religious students over 22 years of age may interrupt their studies for one year in order to work or take on a career (<i>Haaretz</i> 7 May 2007; see also BBC 7 May 2007; <i>Jerusalem Post</i> 23 Jan. 2007). At the end of the year, the students may either perform shortened military service or resume their religious studies (<i>Haaretz</i> 7 May 2007; see also BBC 7 May 2007; <i>Jerusalem Post</i> 23 Jan. 2007). <i>The Jerusalem Post</i> reports that at the 18 February 2007 cabinet meeting, it was acknowledged that some parts of the Tal Law had not yet been executed (19 Feb. 2007). No corroborating information regarding the extent of implementation of the Tal Law could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.	
Tribunal		
Refugee Protection Division		
Immigration Division		
Immigration Appeal Division		
Decisions		
Forms		
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Research		
Research Program		
National Documentation Packages	In April 2007, a government committee voted in favour of a proposed law known as the "Sahar Law" (<i>Jewish Chronicle</i> 26 Apr. 2007; see also <i>The Mail on Sunday</i> 18 Mar. 2007). The Sahar Law will permit sports prodigies to be exempted from military service in exchange for performing service in their communities (<i>Jewish Chronicle</i> 26 Apr. 2007). The proposed law is named after Ben Sahar, a promising Israeli soccer athlete playing for Chelsea in England (<i>ibid.</i> ; <i>Guardian</i> 29 Dec. 2006; <i>The Mail on Sunday</i> 18 Mar. 2007).	
Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets		
Responses to Information Requests		
Recent Research	In May 2007, <i>Haaretz</i> reported that a member of Israel's parliament, the Knesset, was going to propose a bill to abolish mandatory military service. No other information could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate on this proposal (7 May 2007).	
Media Centre		
News		
Information Sheets		
Media Relations	A postdoctoral instructor at the Buchmann Faculty of Law at Tel Aviv University stated the following with respect to military service law and conscientious objectors:	
Proactive Disclosure	The policy regarding conscientious objectors has remained more or less the same in the last decades, despite being challenged before the Israel Supreme Court by	

different petitioners. The way it works is as follows: The army distinguishes between "total" objection to service, stemming from pacifism, and what it calls "selective" objection, stemming from political objection to specific policies and duties of the army. In the former cases, people will be granted exemption from service, and in the latter case, they won't (and should selective objectors refuse to enlist, they can be tried and jailed for Refusal to Obey Orders, an offense according to article 122 of the Military Justice Act, 1955). When someone states, before being drafted, that he or she is a conscientious objector, they are invited to a hearing before a special committee, popularly known as "the conscience committee", whose role is to establish whether the person can be exempted as a "total" objector, or drafted as a "selective" objector. (15 May 2007)

In March 2007, Amnesty International (AI) conveyed its concern regarding the imprisonment of Israeli conscripts and reservists objecting to military service based on conscientious grounds (AI 30 Mar. 2007; see also *ibid.* 2006). Media sources reported in July and August 2006 that an Israeli military captain was jailed for refusing to fight in the conflict in Lebanon (AFP 30 July 2006; ABC 2 Aug. 2006). The Refuser Solidarity Network corroborates the imprisonment of conscientious objectors and states that "Israel maintains an extremely narrow definition of 'conscience,' equating conscientious objection only with some forms of pacifism" (Jan. 2006). The Refuser Solidarity Network also states that Israel does not have a definition of conscientious objection articulated in any official document (Jan. 2006).

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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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Australia Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). 2 August 2006. Conor Duffy. "Israeli Conscientious Objector Jailed, Compulsory Military Service Questioned in Israel." (Factiva)

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The Guardian [London]. 29 December 2006. Matt Scott and Shaul Adar. "New Israeli Law Could Help Sahar Build His Chelsea Career." <http://football.guardian.co.uk/News_Story/0,,1979704,00.html> [Accessed 10 May 2007]

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Refuser Solidarity Network. January 2006. Mirjam Hadar and Sergeiy Sandler. "Conscientious Objectors in Israel's Military Jails." <http://www.refusersolidarity.net/default.asp?content_new=CO_Background> [Accessed 10 May 2007]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, The Israeli Parliament, Legislationline.org, The State of Israel - Ministry of Justice, United States (US) Department of State, War Resisters' International.

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