



Mission permanente d'Israël  
auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies  
et des Organisations Internationales à Genève

משלחת ישראל  
ליד משרד האומות המאוחדות  
והארגוניז הבינלאומיים בג'נבה

Mr. James Heenan  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneva

January 9, 2007

**Re: The protection of human rights in the context of HIV and AIDS.**

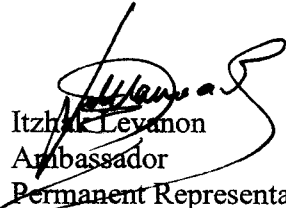
Dear Mr. Heenan:

Attached, please find the Israeli government's response regarding the OHCHR query as to "the protection of human rights in the context of HIV and AIDS," as solicited under Commission on Human Rights resolution 2005/84.

Israel sees HIV/AIDS prevention as an important challenge that is facing the world today, and is actively involved in global research and treatment efforts. The volunteers of the Jerusalem AIDS Project have been commended by UNAIDS for their work to promote HIV/AIDS education and their efforts to increase HIV/AIDS advocacy and training for healthcare and education professionals, both within Israel and abroad.

I hope the attached information will prove useful in the compilation of your progress report to be considered at the fourth session of the Human Rights Council in March-April 2007.

Yours sincerely,

  
Itzhak Leyanov  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

OHCHR REGISTRY

16 JAN 2007

Recipients : J. Heenan

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## **The Protection of Human Rights in the Context of HIV and AIDS**

### **1. General:**

In Israel, the caseload and main modes of HIV transmission have changed dramatically since 1991, following mass immigration from countries with higher rates of generalized HIV epidemics. Nevertheless, the level of HIV epidemic remains low among the Israeli general population, and measures are being intensified in order to sustain and improve the situation.

### **2. Medical Services Available:**

Israel today is one of the most progressive countries with regard to services available in the context of AIDS, with seven national AIDS clinics, where confidential and free AIDS tests are available to all citizens.

AIDS tests are also available in the Ministry of Health (hereinafter: MOH) Sexually Transmitted Infections' Clinics situated in Tel Aviv and Haifa.

Free services to non-citizens are partially available: the MOH provides free treatment to all pregnant women throughout the pregnancy, as well as for a period of six months after birth, regardless of the woman's legal status.

In addition, a designated Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO) for the treatment of non-citizens/residents, the "Meuchedet" HMO, provides services to minor foreign workers.

### **3. Protection of Children:**

Under Israeli law, children, including minors, are entitled to AIDS tests without the knowledge or consent of their parents.

Furthermore, the MOH, along with the Ministry of Education, are very active in educating and promoting the use of preventive measures, as well as eliminating stereotypes with regard to AIDS.

Special attention is being paid to Israel's migrant worker population, which is considered to be at higher risk for transmission of HIV. The MOH had recently trained 25 health professionals, including guides and coordinators, to escort the families of migrant

workers infected with HIV and to facilitate their access to services available to them. Additionally, there are special training programs available to this population, as well as special support and increasing awareness groups.

In general, most recent national campaigns focus on children and youth, although even in comparison with other western countries, the level of HIV epidemic among children in Israel is low.

#### **4. Awareness and Prevention Campaigns:**

Comprehensive relevant information, including potential risks, statistics, and methods of preventing transmission such as condoms and abstinence, is available at all times through the MOH website.

Israel's first large-scale national AIDS campaign started in December 2000, and focused on the need for continuing condom use until both partners tested HIV-negative.

Other campaigns highlighted increasing acceptance of people living with HIV (by decreasing the general perception of risk of infection from casual contact), and increasing awareness for other (non-AIDS) sexually transmitted infections.

In December 2006, the MOH launched a new and intensive campaign to increase awareness to the use of condoms and other preventative measures, especially with regard to the right of women to insist on using a condom.

#### **5. Pilot Syringe-Exchange Program (SEP) in Israel**

Addiction to injection drugs is a major risk factor for transmission of blood-borne viruses such as HIV. Behavioral patterns of HIV transmission associated with injected drug use (IDU) include shared use of needles and paraphernalia, and unprotected intercourse due to lowered inhibitions associated with the use of certain kinds of drugs. Between 1981-2005, IDU accounted for 14.7% of all recorded HIV/AIDS cases in Israel. A pilot intervention was initiated by the MOH's Department of Tuberculosis and AIDS and the Department of Addictiion, the Israel Anti-drugs Authority and the Jerusalem Methadone Center. During 2004-2005 a syringe exchange program was initiated in three major cities (Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv and Ashdod). Some 450 IDUs have been included in this program. An extensive process of evaluation is pending.