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Degrading, Abusive and Cruel: What It's Like for a Jewish Woman to Get Divorced in Israel



Eritrean asylum seekers protesting a government plan in 2018 for mass deportation that was later cancelled. Credit: Megeed Gozani

Opinion

Opinion | Stop Netanyahu's Cruel, Illegal Threat to Deport African Asylum Seekers From Israel

The word 'deportation' carries a heavy weight for Jews. But now an Israeli government fueled by racist extremism and anti-refugee sentiment is detaining asylum seekers without charge and threatening to expel refugees from Eritrea and Darfur



Diddy Mymin Kahn

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In south Tel Aviv, in our sanctuary for women seeking asylum from diverse African nations, a lingering sense of shock and horror remains following the appalling violence at an Eritrean embassy event Saturday where supporters and opponents of the country's dictatorship clashed with one another and police using rocks, pieces of metal and planks of wood, leaving dozens injured. Israeli riot police fired stun grenades and live rounds of fire trying to quell the protesters.

It has left our families here gripped by fear, confined to their homes, desperate for a glimmer of hope.

Eritrean refugees in Israel warned anti-regime protest would be violent. They were right.

Unwanted and unrecognized by Israel, thousands of Eritrean refugees have left for Canada

Tel Aviv riots put spotlight on Israel's covert ties with Eritrea's dictator

The anti-Eritrean government asylum seekers, the vast majority of asylum seekers, begged, warned, and pleaded with the police to cancel the event. But their pleas fell on deaf ears, and what followed was a scene of unimaginable brutality that left over 150 people injured. The police, woefully underprepared – despite prior warnings from the community of what could erupt if the Eritrean embassy held their event – responded with excessive force.

The level of violence and disregard for human life displayed was unconscionable. One would expect that such a tragedy would prompt an immediate investigation to prevent its recurrence. However, the government's reaction was far from what we hoped for. Instead of seeking justice and learning from this catastrophe, they chose to flex their collective muscle by arresting suspects in the unrest and placing them in administrative detention and threatening deportation. The government is using the clashes to fuel racist extremism and anti-refugee sentiment, furthering its agenda and n

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Eritrean protesters clash with Israeli riot police in Tel Aviv, Israel, Saturday. Credit: Ohad Zwigenberg / AP

The word "deportation" carries with it a heavy weight for Jews. It's a haunting reminder of the Holocaust and the unimaginable horrors and evisceration of human values that unfolded during that darkest of times. In Israel of 2023, this word is becoming an emblem of the decline of our own values, as the Israeli government, and by extension, the State of Israel, considers implementing a plan that has long been on their agenda. Talk of deportation goes back to the

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Sudan then Eritrea crossed the Sinai Desert and came here as asylum seekers.

Today there are some 18,000 Eritreans in Israel, along with about 6,000 other African asylum seekers, most of them stuck in a cycle of trauma and grinding poverty, directly related to Israeli government policy.

The impact of this weekend's violence and the government's response is felt acutely [in the sanctuary of Kuchinate's studio](#), not far from where the violence played out. This is where our loving community of asylum-seeking artisans gather to hand-craft baskets, accessories and home goods, whose proceeds from sales help them provide for their families and live in dignity. Overflowing with colorful fabrics and with African music playing in the background, it's a healing environment where the women come to find a sense of community and learn both commercial and artistic skills. Our team includes social workers who provide psycho-social support to traumatized women. We are located amid concrete buildings and garages, but what our studio lacks in grandeur, it makes up for in soul.

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going on, only dares share her first initial for this article, expressed the collective sentiment, saying, "It's so hard and scary. What will they do to us?"

The fear has permeated every aspect of their lives, making them afraid to attract attention or even talk to one another in public places.

T. another one of the women at Kuchinate, speaks of the distressing reality of facing derogatory comments from Israelis on a regular basis, like "Go back to Africa."

The women are constantly on edge, afraid to be alone and are only venturing out in groups in order to feel more safe. . They feel the weight of hatred, racism, and xenophobia as they notice fellow passengers on the bus move away from them. The children of these asylum seekers are suffering too, unable to sleep as they fear being deported to a country their parents fled, a country that has not changed one bit.

R, another woman who is part of the Kuchinate community, her voice choked with emotion, asked, "What will happen to us? What will happen to our children?"

The deportation of asylum seekers is not only morally reprehensible but also a violation of international law. Israel is a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention. It is a decision that will condemn our women, their children, families, and community to persecution and potentially even death.

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These asylum seekers left their homes in Eritrea and risked everything to escape a dictatorship that has been called "The North Korea of Africa.". Shockingly, less than one percent of asylum seekers in Israel have been granted refugee status, leaving the vast majority without basic human rights and devoid of any prospects or hope for the future trapped in a terrible state of limbo. This stands in stark contrast to the Global North, in countries like Canada and Sweden where over 80 percent of Eritrean asylum seekers have been recognized as refugees, highlighting their dire need for refuge.



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As a country founded as a refuge for Jews facing persecution, how can we even begin to consider such a reprehensible and inhumane proposal as mass deportation? We must all rise up and put an immediate stop to this madness.

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in 2018, when [Israel's government attempted to deport an asylum seeker](#), civil society unleashed an unprecedented backlash, declaring, "Not in our name." People even offered to hide asylum seekers in their homes to protect them from the immigration police. Deportation became a trigger that united Israelis with a conscience, forcing the government to back down.

However, the political landscape has since shifted, and we now face an even greater challenge. We must push harder, shout louder, and ensure that this abhorrent idea is buried once and for all.

Let us stand together, and demand that our government upholds the values on which this country was built. We cannot turn a blind eye to the suffering of those seeking refuge within our borders and we definitely cannot deport them.

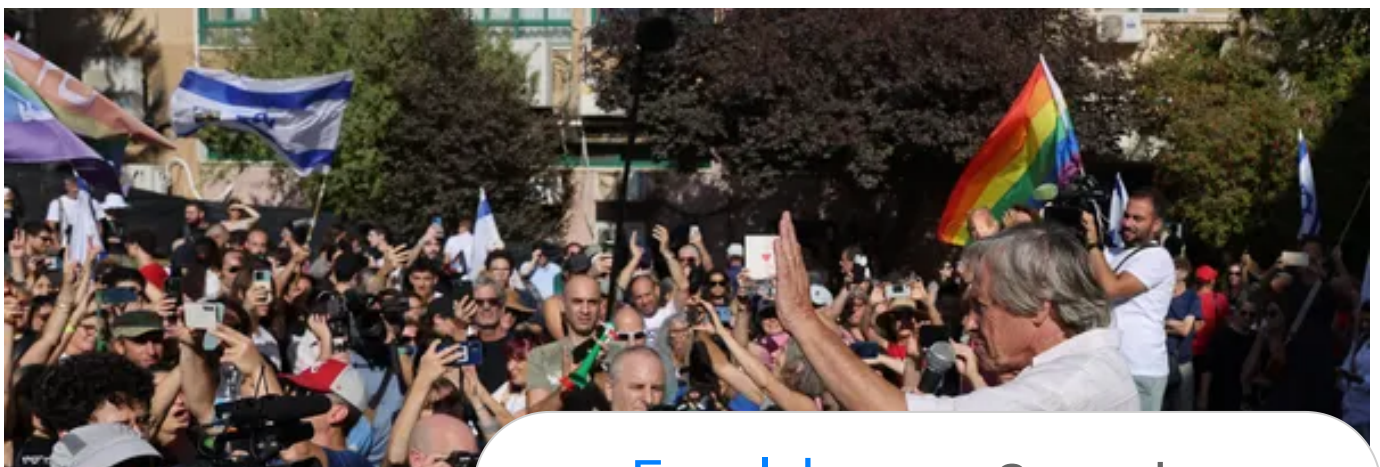
It is our duty, as individuals and as a nation, to fight for the rights and dignity of every human being. We must act now, before it is too late, and ensure that the threat of illegal deportation of asylum seekers to imminent danger becomes nothing more than a dark chapter in our history.

Dr. Diddy Mymin Kahn, is co-founder and CEO of [Kuchinate](#).

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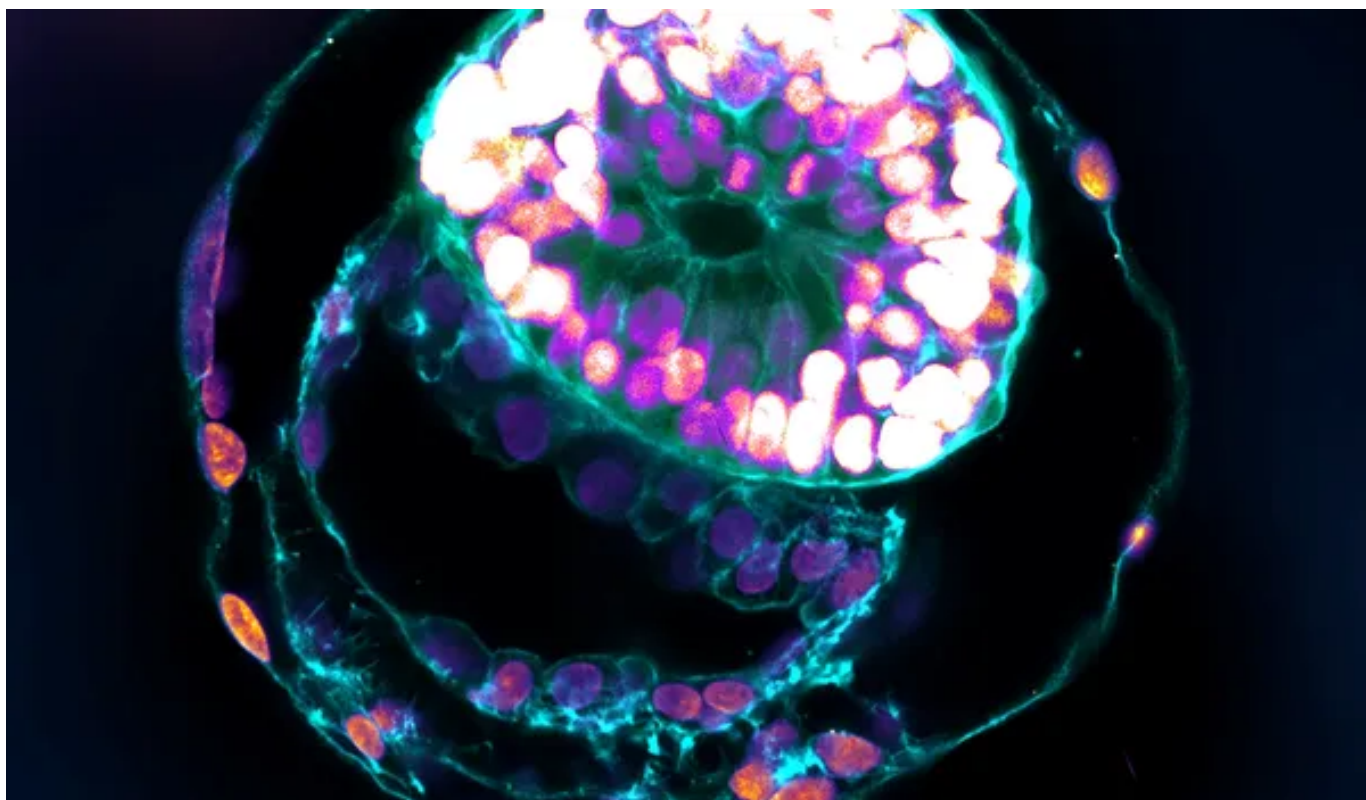
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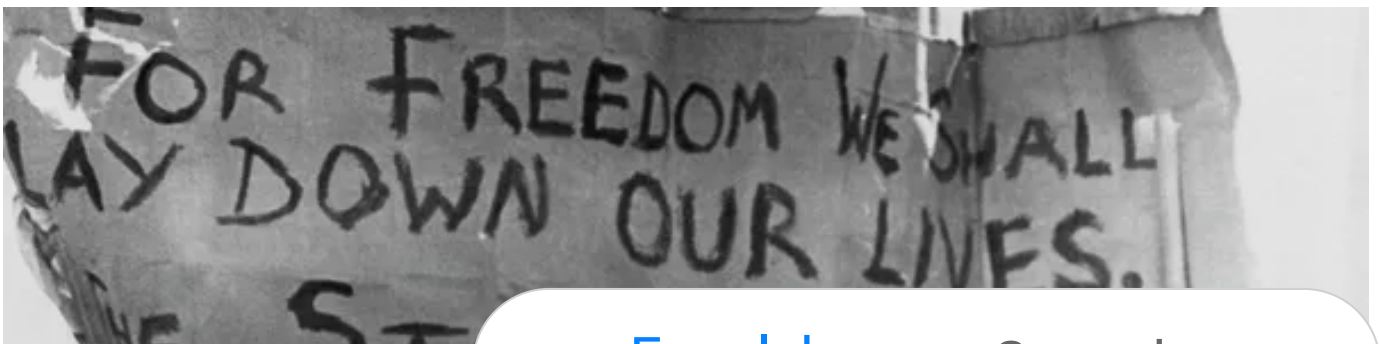
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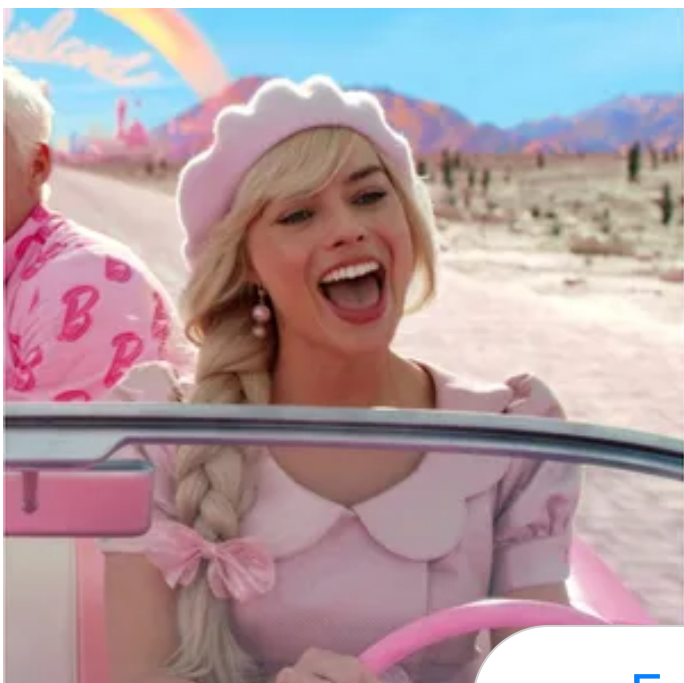


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