

## OVERVIEW

Despite enormous progress since its creation, Israel is experiencing serious social and political tensions, particularly between its more fundamentalist Jewish communities and the secular elite. An increasing number of migrants are settling in Israel. Many arrive from Africa undocumented. Others immigrate legally, such as Filipinos, who work in Israel's health care sector. Unskilled laborers from Eritrea and Ethiopia have taken jobs Palestinians once held until the separation barrier blocked Palestinian access to Israel.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

A majority of Arab Israelis — 53 percent — live in poverty, which some suggest is due to their treatment as second-class citizens. Government subsidies for public infrastructure, health care clinics and schools in Israeli Arab communities lag behind support for the same in Jewish communities. Overcrowded housing remains an issue in Arab neighborhoods as fewer housing permits are issued and incomes decline.

## IMPACT ON CHRISTIANS

Officially, Christians are a minority within a minority. Arab Israeli Christians count for about 2.4 percent of the population. It is estimated that Israel's undocumented migrant community may include more than 60,000 Catholics.

Israeli Arab and migrant Christian communities face continuous challenges. One of the greatest is a matter of identity — helping Arab Christians to maintain their history, culture and religious practices in a country where Jews and Muslims predominate and exert the most control. Israeli Catholic school students score high on state tests, but the country's department of education is withholding government funding for Catholic schools, putting that education system at risk.

## CNEWA'S PRESENCE

CNEWA has a long and venerable history in this particular corner of the Middle East. As it does throughout the region, CNEWA in Israel offers a lifeline to those who might otherwise feel marginalized or isolated. Working closely with the leadership of the local churches, we support a number of pastoral

programs, including faith formation and Bible study programs targeting young people. We have worked to improve and enhance facilities of church institutions serving those in need of education, health care and social services. We have also taken the lead in supporting programs that serve Israel's Hebrew-speaking and migrant communities.



Here are a few examples of CNEWA's collaborative efforts in Israel:

- Through the St. James Vicariate of the Latin Patriarchate, CNEWA offers pastoral and spiritual support to migrants, particularly day laborers and domestic workers
- Supports the children of migrants, providing clean and safe environments, such as the St. Rachel Center in Jerusalem
- Spearheads initiatives to help Israel's Hebrew-speaking Christians
- Provides support to the ongoing formation of Melkite Greek Catholic clergy
- Assists formation programs and promote employment opportunities for young adults
- Strengthens the social service institutions of the churches, such as St. Louis Hospital in Jerusalem, which are among the only places where Christians, Jews and Muslims meet in this highly polarized state