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## **MK Michaeli: Belarus visa deal will boost human trafficking in Israel**

### **US downgraded Minsk to tier three with world's worst offenders**



Meirav Michaeli. (photo credit: MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/THE JERUSALEM POST)

Signing an agreement allowing visa-free travel between Israel and Belarus, a country with one of the worst human trafficking problems in the world, will bring that problem to Israel, MK Merav Michaeli warned on social media.

The cabinet authorized the agreement on Sunday, meaning that citizens of the two countries can travel back and forth without needing a visa.

“Belarus is a central country of origin for human trafficking – women and children, men and handicapped people.

It is a poor country with no protection for human rights,” Michaeli wrote on Facebook Saturday night.

The Zionist Union MK posited that when the need for a visa is canceled, women sold into prostitution or people sold into other types of forced labor will be able to enter Israel en masse.

“The fact is that the US and European countries demand a visa from Belarus,” she pointed out.

Michaeli added that the department that fights human trafficking in the Justice Ministry opposes the agreement.

“The visa-free agreement with Belarus means the same thing as a human trafficking agreement,” she concluded.

A July 2015 report from the US State Department put Belarus in the worst category for human trafficking, calling it “a source, transit and destination country for men, women and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor.”

In 2013, Belarus wrote a plan to eliminate trafficking, but did not convict any traffickers and stopped investigating them, according to the State Department.

Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked voted in favor of the agreement, despite her ministry’s position, because the government already signed it.

Shaked said that the Justice Ministry was negligent in 2014, when the government discussed the matter, and should have insisted on a discussion before the agreement was signed.

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