KNESSET REPORT ON THE WELFARE OF THE CHILD IN ISRAEL 2012

Aaron Atias:

A girl disappeared from her home a month and a half ago and she cannot be found. I reported this to the police. Unfortunately the answer I received was that the girl missing from her own free will and that it would take a long time to find her. I think that this is very serious so I started to look up the story of girls in distress in the city of Lod, most of them girls who are spending time with Arabs. From the time I started looking into the story of the missing girl I am constantly hearing more and more difficult stories of girls who are missing.

The phenomenon of the these girls are mostly girls from families that lack financial means. The boys buy them with money, jeans, cellphones and all different material things that cause them to leave their homes and go to dark places, places where we see them doing drugs, alcohol and prostitution. Families tell me," I haven't seen my daughter for years and I do not know if she is still alive". The girl's family is begging me to help them – they know where the girl is, help us save her. And then the social services tell us "there is no room in the system for these girls." And I think that a girl that comes to the court and tells them there is no room for you and you have to go to the street , any Arab that just came out of prison takes her out on bail and he causes her to do drugs. This is something they saw with their own eyes. Where is a 15 year old going to take money to bail herself out?

I am crying out to help these girls before they come to such a situation, to find them a framework. And to save girls who are already in this situation and to give them solutions.

The situation in Lod from what I heard from the mayor, is that 250 woman converted to Islam and live in distress in all different places in Lod. The situation is catastrophic, we cannot continue this way. I call upon the committee to help us solve this problem.

Aviva:

All the officials here know me, Lod police, welfare officials, social workers , everybody knows us. Every day, I would run to them asking them for help and they, like me, would be helpless and say that there is no room for these girls. They cannot turn these girls in even though they use drugs alcohol and worse things because they did not file a complaint. If I would slap my child, all the officials would jump at me but what happens in the case in which strangers are abusing these girls and nobody could do anything including an investigation officer who told me on Friday at 2 am, "Aviva, I am helpless just like you". That is not an answer. Who should care about the girls 15 and 16 years old sleeping on benches in the street and socializing with Arab men? Nobody except for us, the family who has no help from anyone. The officials know how many times during the year I have been here morning and nights and nothing happened. They explained to me that in Israel there are 2 closed institutions for girls, each one with 40 girls and there is no more room. She has to be on a waiting list. Why? At the age of 18 no one will have control over her and by then who knows if she will still be alive- what are you waiting for? Where is all the funds? I have not gotten answers from noone.

Minister of Knesset Zevulun Orlev:

We are here to speak to the representatives of the government to ask for explanations, to offer solutions. The authority is in the hands of the government and this is an issue which is important to discuss.

Yifat Meiri:

We know Aviva and her family very well. I would like to present our work in Lod with the girls. We deal with over 200 girls a year. We offer individual and community care. We are familiar with the violence and sexual abuse the girls go through. We invite the girls for private meetings at our offices and we meet them outside. We cooperate with different frameworks which exist in the community, if it’s the school or the police.

Z.O.

Do you have a limit on the amount of girls you can place?

Y.M

No. But there is a waiting list for girls to go into closed institutions and in the meantime the girls are outside on the streets. We see the families suffering, the pain and the risk. We receive reports from the police on these girls who are walking around with men known to the police either Arabs or Jews.

There are girls at the age of 13 who are already in bad relationships and this is a situation we can't tolerate.

Z.O.

How many girls does one social workers work with?

Y.M.

Over 70-80 girls.

Z.O.

How many social workers do you have?

3 and not all full time.

Y.M.

We try to do our best working with these girls. We work not only with Jewish girls but also Arabs and new immigrants.

Z.O.

There is no doubt that every citizen is entitled to help but the picture is very sad. Professionally no social worker can help 60 girls at risk It is practically impossible. That means that we are basically abandoning these girls.

Tali Yogav:

We also have a problem of manpower. we had a problem recruiting educational counselors.

Z.O.

If in Lod 6 girls are waiting to get in to an institutions, how many girls are waiting country-wide?

T.Y.

Over 150 from them 15 are at very high risk.

Z.O.

The 150 are known girls but there are many more girls that are not known, that don't come to us. Who knows where they are.

I.Y.

The situation is very very difficult and we had a few meetings on this matter. It is a situation that no one could stay indifferent to.

Z.O.

Do you know how long it will take for places to open up for those 6 girls?

M.R.

It could take months

Z.O.

Months is a lifetime, I know I live here in this country. And there are more girls.

These girls are in a life threatening situations. We all know that these girls must be in a closed institution so that they will not get hurt and we are telling them, we do not have room for you. There was a girl who once waited 20 hours at the police station because there was no room for her.

T.Y.

It is important for me to say that in the last 3 years there is a growing awareness in our office. In the last decade, excluding the 2 new groups at Tzofia (a shelter) there were no other openings of closed institutions. Now it is known how important it is but it will take time. We won't see it in the next year and a half.

Z.O

It is very sad for me to hear that there are over 150 girls waiting for help. It is very difficult to hear and I think that it is a irresponsibility and a recklessness on our part. Any professional knows what the outcome is for such a girl.