

Israel gives African migrants until end of March to leave or face arrest



Tel Aviv, Feb 8 (RHC)-- Israel has begun notifying African migrants that they have until the end of March to leave the occupied territories or face jail, officials say. On January 3rd, Israel started the implementation of a plan to deport nearly 38,000 migrants who had entered the occupied territories, mainly Eritreans and Sudanese, threatening to detain those who refuse to leave.

Immigration authority spokeswoman Sabine Haddad said that Israeli officials have started issuing deportation notices advising the refugees that they had 60 days to leave Israel voluntarily. The first round of letters is issued only to men without families, officials said.

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz said the number of refugees subject to near-term deportation is "between 15,000 and 20,000 people." Under the plan, the Africans who agree to leave will each get a plane ticket as well as \$3,500. However, the grant offered to those who refuse to leave by the deadline will be reduced and "enforcement measures" will be taken against them and anyone employing them.

Tel Aviv describes the African migrants who entered Israel illegally from neighboring Egypt as "infiltrators." The Israeli regime has claimed that it had agreed with Uganda and Rwanda to take in

Israeli-expelled Sudanese and Eritreans migrants over concerns that they may face danger if they return home. Both African countries have denied the claim.

The issued notices do not specify where Israeli-expelled migrants would be sent. The plan, initially approved by the cabinet in November, has drawn concerns from the UN refugee agency, which called it incoherent and unsafe.

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