

Israel cracks down on illegal immigrants

by UPI

JERUSALEM -- Israel is cracking down on illegal immigrants, including many refugees from Sudan, who cross over its 140-mile border with Egypt. Israeli officials say about 2,800 people have illegally crossed into Israel in recent years and most come from Africa, The Los Angeles Times reported Thursday. An estimated 1,160 of the illegal immigrants are asylum seekers from Sudan seeking to escape alleged harassment they faced in Egypt, the newspaper said. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's office said the country's army has been ordered to turn back anyone attempting to cross the border from Egypt and refugees already in the country would be turned back as soon as a full list is compiled. However, the Israeli government agreed to consider allowing a small number of the refugees from the Darfur region of Sudan to remain in the country and receive public assistance. It didn't say whether other newcomers would be allowed to apply for asylum. Officials in Israel said the Egyptian government has given them assurances of the safety of the illegal immigrants being turned back. However, human rights organizations said the pledge doesn't ensure that Egypt won't send the refugees back to Sudan.

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