

# Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

## Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Israel

### Introduction

Traditionally, the public obligation of the legal profession in Israel was seen as corresponding to the project of nation-building and contributing to national institutions. There was no sense that the provision of free legal services was required to fulfill any social obligation that the profession might have, or to uphold the legitimacy or exclusivity of the profession with respect to legal services. Issues such as access to justice, legal representation of the poor and protection of human rights were generally absent from the discourse and practices of the Bar.<sup>1</sup> Since the 1990s, however, both the traditional concept of lawyering, as well as the Israel Bar Association's hegemony in this area, have eroded.

Today, the Israel Bar Association Act provides that "the Bar Association is entitled, *inter alia*, to provide legal relief to those of limited means."<sup>2</sup> Pro Bono practice is, in other words, permissible but not mandatory. Though not required, pro bono is increasingly being viewed as essential for the fulfilment of the right of legal representation. This dramatic change in pro bono culture and practice is perhaps best illustrated by the 2002 launch of the Israel Bar Association's first pro bono program, Schar Mitzvah. This move was preceded by a two-year struggle within the Israel Bar Association's internal institutions, as critics feared that the initiative would encroach upon the livelihoods of practitioners who currently provided legal services for a fee to many of the same individuals who would become eligible for pro bono legal services.<sup>3</sup> In Israel, the term "legal aid" is more prevalent in legal discourse than the term "pro bono". Attorneys usually refer to one of three categories of no-fee or reduced-fee services as falling under the concept of legal aid: (i) state sponsored legal aid; (ii) legal aid provided by non-profit organizations and NGOs; and (iii) legal services provided by private sector attorneys. For purposes of this chapter, the term "pro bono" refers to all three categories, except where otherwise made explicit.

### At a glance

| Minimum pro bono hours requirement for lawyers? | Specific pro bono licence required? | May foreign lawyers practice pro bono? | Insurance required for law firm pro bono? | Insurance required for in-house pro bono? | Rules to limit advertising pro bono work? | Does pro bono work count to CLE credit? | Limitations for in-house lawyers to do pro bono? |
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| No  | No                                  | Yes                                    | No  | No  | No  | No                                      | No   |

<sup>1</sup> N. Ziv, *The Legal Profession: Looking Backward: Combining Professionalism, Nation Building and Public Service: The Professional Project of the Israeli Bar 1928 – 2002*, 71 *Fordham L. Rev.* 1621, 1623 (2003).

<sup>2</sup> Israel Bar Association Act, Section 3(2) (1961).

<sup>3</sup> The struggle to reform the Bar Association and the profession can be traced through a series of Supreme Court cases that challenged the legality and even constitutionality of some of the established rules and regulations, most notably the prohibitions on advertising and on holding certain additional occupations. In 2001, the total ban on advertising by attorneys was replaced with a regulatory scheme that allows attorneys to advertise their services under certain conditions. Israel Bar Association Rules (Advertising) 2001; Israel Bar Association Rules (Additional Practices) 2002, respectively.

## The landscape

| Professional regulation   |  |
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| <p>1. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of legal services, including any licensing required to provide legal services. Please highlight any differences for lawyers working as in-house counsel.</p> | <p><i>Regulation</i></p> <p>The Israel Bar Association regulates the provision of legal services in Israel, pursuant to The Bar Association Act, 5721-1961.<sup>4</sup> There are no different laws or rules regulating the provision of legal services for lawyers working as in-house counsel. It should be noted that while there has been a significant increase in the amount of pro bono legal services being provided by law firms in Israel, it is still very rare for in-house counsel (including legal departments in large corporations) to provide pro bono legal services.</p> <p><i>Licensing</i></p> <p>Only members of the Israel Bar Association can practice Israeli law in Israel. Israeli law requires licensure to practice as an attorney, and acquiring such a license requires (i) an academic legal education, (ii) a period of apprenticeship and (iii) passing an examination. The academic requisite is studied through an undergraduate program, i.e. a bachelor's level education, at the end of which an LL.B degree is awarded. For purposes of acceptance to the Israeli Bar, degrees comparable with the Israeli bachelor of law (LL.B), offered by a recognized university outside of Israel, can substitute for an Israeli degree provided the applicant pass a special exam on the laws of Israel.</p> <p>In order to be accepted to the Israeli Bar, a law student must continue his or her legal education beyond the LL.B degree by undertaking a one-year internship (a "staj") under the training of an experienced attorney (i.e. an attorney who has practiced law for at least five years) or a judge. Public service legal internships are valid.</p> <p>After completing their internship, candidates are</p> |

<sup>4</sup> See [http://www.israelbar.org.il/english\\_index.asp](http://www.israelbar.org.il/english_index.asp); [http://www.israelbar.org.il/uploadFiles/The\\_Bar\\_Association\\_Act\\_june\\_2015.pdf](http://www.israelbar.org.il/uploadFiles/The_Bar_Association_Act_june_2015.pdf) (last visited on January 28, 2025)

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|  | <p>eligible to sit for the Bar exam after which they become members of the Israeli bar and licensed to practice law.</p> <p>Attorneys licensed to practice in non-Israeli jurisdictions are permitted to practice in Israel regarding the laws which apply in the jurisdiction in which they are licensed to practice. Foreign law firms may also establish local branches in Israel, in which attorneys licensed to practice in foreign jurisdictions may practice law, provided such legal services relate to the law of the jurisdiction in which they are licensed.</p>   |
| <b>Regulatory landscape for pro bono</b>   |   |
| <p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p> | <p>In April of 2002 the Israel Bar Association approved the <i>Schar Mitzvah</i> program, which mission was to “substantially expand accessibility to the justice system and provide legal aid to those who cannot afford to pay for legal services.”<sup>5</sup> Licensed attorneys (private or government attorneys) are allowed to enroll in the program. Two kinds of legal aid are provided under the program:</p> <p>(i) one program consists of initial counseling and guidance offered in c. 70 help centers located throughout the country. The primary aim of the centers is to guide petitioners and empower them to independently pursue their claims and assert their rights <i>pro se</i>. This service is provided at no cost to the petitioner and with no eligibility threshold;</p> <p>(ii) the other form of assistance provides legal representation before judicial tribunals. In order to be eligible for this form of assistance, the petitioner must meet a set of eligibility requirements. The eligibility threshold of the <i>Schar Mitzvah</i> for representation before judicial tribunals is designed to complement the Ministry of Justice legal aid program: as such, the Bar Association will not provide legal aid to a petitioner who is eligible for state-sponsored legal aid, other than in emergency situations. A family of up to three persons whose earnings total of approximately 67%-85% of the national average will be eligible for legal aid provided by the Bar Association,</p> |

<sup>5</sup> “Schar Mitzvah”, [https://www.israelbar.biz/hatzibor\\_harahv/tochnit\\_shar\\_mitzva\\_mida\\_latzibor/](https://www.israelbar.biz/hatzibor_harahv/tochnit_shar_mitzva_mida_latzibor/) (last visited on January 28, 2025).

whereas families with earnings of less than approximately 67% will be referred to the state-sponsored legal aid program.

State sponsored civil legal aid is governed by the Legal Aid Act and the Legal Aid Regulations.<sup>6</sup> The law stipulates that any resident of Israel may receive legal assistance in the form of legal services provided by government attorneys, so long as he or she qualifies under the economic criteria. In order to qualify for legal aid, a petitioner must fulfill three conditions: (i) the legal issue must pertain to the prescribed areas of law which include (amongst others) matters of family law and personal status, protection of victims of violence, disconnection from electricity or water, assistance to victims of sexual assault and representation of minors; (ii) the petitioner must meet two economic criteria: (a) total pre-tax earnings may not exceed 2/3 of the average income for a family of three, with increases of 6% for each additional family member; and (b) available funds from property ownership may not exceed three times the average income mentioned above, with an exclusion for one private residence, other than certain specific categories of legal issues in paragraph (i) above where this economic eligibility criteria may be modified or waived; and (iii) the claim must have legal merit, i.e. there is a reasonable prospect in law of succeeding in the claim.

In addition, the Office of the Public Defender and the Public Defender Act expands the right of public defense to indigent defendants when the likely outcome of the legal proceedings will have grave and fateful consequences for that person. In addition, the Public Defender Act entitles persons suffering from a personal disability that adversely impacts upon their basic ability to defend themselves, to public defense. Further, a person is entitled to representation by a public defender when exceptional rules of procedure and evidence are being applied in a trial or when such representation is necessary to ensure due

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<sup>6</sup> Legal Aid Act 1972 and Legal Aid Regulation 1973, respectively.

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|  | process and prevent a perversion of the law. <sup>7</sup>   |
| 3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?                            | Lawyers in Israel do not require any additional license to provide pro bono legal services.   |
| 4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)? | Foreign lawyers are required to be licensed in Israel—i.e., be members of the Israel Bar Association—to provide legal services, including pro bono legal services. In addition to a degree comparable with the Israeli bachelor of law (LL.B), offered by a recognized university outside of Israel, foreign lawyers must pass a special exam on the laws of Israel in order to be licensed in Israel and provide pro bono legal services. <sup>8</sup> Attorneys licensed to practice in non-Israeli jurisdictions are permitted to practice in Israel regarding the laws which apply in the jurisdiction in which they are licensed to practice, whether as individuals or in branches of foreign law firms established and registered in Israel. |
| 5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?   | Lawyers in Israel are not required to work a minimum number of pro bono hours. The Israel Bar Association Act provides that “the Bar shall provide legal relief to those with limited means who are not entitled to such relief from the State pursuant to the law”. <sup>9</sup> In other words, complementing the state’s legal aid system is one of the responsibilities of the Bar Association in Israel. Such responsibility, however, is not the personal responsibility of lawyers in Israel, but of the Bar as a whole. Though not required, pro bono is increasingly being viewed as essential for the fulfilment of the right of legal representation.  |
| 6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?                  | Aspiring lawyers in Israel are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become licensed lawyers.   |

<sup>7</sup> Section 18 of the Public Defense Act, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Israel Bar Association Law Amendment (5709-2009), which stipulates that the Bar Association may register foreign attorneys and law firms operating in Israel on the basis of their law license at a foreign bar association.

<sup>9</sup> Israel Bar Association Act, Section 2(4) (1961).

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| <p>7. Aside from mandatory targets (if any), are there aspirational pro bono hours targets for lawyers set by the local bar association, regulatory body or other body?</p>   | <p>There are no aspirational pro bono hours targets for lawyers set by the local bar association or other bodies. The Israeli Bar operated the Schar Mitzvah program, which encourages lawyers to engage in pro bono activity but does not set any targets.</p>  |
| <p>8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?</p>   | <p>No, lawyers in Israel do not receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked.</p>   |
| <b>Insurance and advertising</b>  |  |
| <p>9. Do lawyers need professional indemnity legal insurance cover for pro bono legal services they provide? Does the requirement differ for in-house lawyers?</p> <p>If insurance is required, can lawyers meet the requirement by working under the cover of another pro bono provider, e.g. in partnership with a private law firm or organization working on the same pro bono project?</p> | <p>Lawyers in Israel do not require professional indemnity legal insurance cover for any pro bono legal services that they provide. However, attorneys licensed in foreign jurisdictions providing services in Israel regarding the laws which apply in the jurisdiction in which they are licensed to practice, regardless such services are pro-bono or not, must provide the Bar Association with collateral in order to ensure compensation for anyone who might be injured by any of his / her actions.<sup>10</sup></p> <p>There are no different requirements for in-house counsel.</p>   |
| <p>10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?</p>   | <p>The struggle to reform the Israel Bar Association and the profession can be traced through a series of Supreme Court cases that challenged the legality and even constitutionality of some of the established rules and regulations, most notably the prohibitions on advertising and on holding certain additional occupations. In 2001, the total ban on advertising by attorneys was replaced with a regulatory scheme that allows attorneys to advertise their services in a limited fashion (e.g., name, title, qualifications, languages spoken). Israel Bar Association Rules (Advertising) 2001; Israel Bar Association Rules (Additional Practices) 2002, respectively. As such, the rules prohibit advertising successes or soliciting clients—whether pro bono or not.<sup>11</sup> However, such prohibitions are seldom enforced and are</p> |

<sup>10</sup> See section 98f4(a) to the Israel Bar Association Law

<sup>11</sup> See

[http://www.israelbar.org.il/uploadFiles/Bar\\_Association\\_Rules\\_\(advertising\)\\_english\\_nov\\_2011.pdf](http://www.israelbar.org.il/uploadFiles/Bar_Association_Rules_(advertising)_english_nov_2011.pdf) (last visited on January 28, 2025).

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|   | generally ignored by attorneys and firms.   |
| <b>Pro bono practice and culture</b>  |   |
| 11. What are the main areas of law which require or present opportunities for pro bono? What are the major unmet legal needs? | <p>The main areas of law which require or present opportunities for the provision of pro bono legal services are: (i) civil rights; (ii) family law (including divorce) (iii) education rights; and (iv) refugee and immigration matters, and more recently (v) general legal assistance for reservists.</p> <p>In terms of unmet legal needs, approximately 72,039 illegal immigrants currently live in Israel,<sup>12</sup> of which approximately 51,502 entered Israel legally and have over-stayed their work or tourist visa with which they have entered, and approximately 20,537 entered Israel illegally. The state policy towards such people is one of temporary non-deportation, officially referred to as “group protection”, or of voluntary departure for those who qualify. These people are denied basic rights provided to residents, including free non-emergency healthcare, and have limited or no access to basic state-sponsored services, including pro bono legal services, other than representation by the Office of the Public Defender (for criminal matters only). NGOs providing legal aid to illegal immigrants are: Kav LaOved (Worker’s Hotline); The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants and HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society).</p> |
| 12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?  | <p>Pro bono legal services are provided through NGOs, state-sponsored programs, Law faculties of universities and colleges and private sector attorneys. It is unclear which actors provide the largest proportions of pro bono legal services in Israel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal aid provided by non-profit organizations and NGOs.<sup>13</sup> Examples of leading NGOs that provide legal aid include ACRI (the Association for Civil Rights in Israel); <i>Adalah</i> (the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel); Kav</li> </ul>   |

<sup>12</sup> According to Population and Immigration Authority data reviewing October 2024.

<sup>13</sup> This includes cause-lawyering. In this chapter the term “cause-lawyering” refers to legal aid provided by attorneys who are paid, albeit not by a client, such as staff attorneys at NGOs.

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|  | <p>LaOved (Worker’s Hotline); and Naamat (Israel’s Working Women’s Organization). HIAS, Tabeka (Association for Justice and Equality for the Ethiopian Community)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State-sponsored legal aid, which exists in two forms: (i) the Legal Aid Bureau of the Ministry of Justice, which is charged with the administration of legal aid in civil matters, such as family and labor law and social benefit litigation;<sup>14</sup> (ii) the Office of the Public Defender, which is charged with providing legal aid in criminal cases.</li> <li>• Legal services provided by private sector attorneys: Attorneys participate<sup>15</sup> and outside attorneys provide services in the courts and other legal forums where fees are paid by the state. These opportunities are available to all private sector attorneys, including in-house counsel, seeking to provide pro bono legal services.</li> <li>• Legal Clinics provided by Law Faculties of universities and colleges.</li> </ul> |
| <p>13. Are there any noteworthy examples of how innovative technology or artificial intelligence is being used to enable access to pro bono or otherwise as part of pro bono cases or matters?</p> | <p>There are no notable examples in Israel yet, although the legal tech industry is growing and commercial products can be used on pro bono matters in general.<sup>16</sup></p>  |
| <b>Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts</b>  |   |
| <p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Israel Bar Association Pro Bono Project (Schar Mitzvah): as described above, provides two kinds of legal aid under the program. One consists of initial counseling and guidance offered in help centers located throughout the country. The primary aim of the centers is to guide</li> </ul>  |

<sup>14</sup> Legal Aid Act 1972 and Legal Aid Regulation 1973. In 2011, the Legal Aid Department at the Ministry of Justice provided legal representation in approximately 518,682 legal proceedings between the years 2019 and 2023, an average of 104,000 cases per year. Ministry of Justice, Israel, Functions of the Legal Aid Department, available at <https://www.justice.gov.il/En/Guides/TheLegalAidDepartment/Pages/LegalAidDepartment-.aspx> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>15</sup> The Israel Bar Association, “Schar Mitzvah”, The Israel Bar Association Pro Bono Program, (May 20, 2010),

<sup>16</sup> [https://techlaw.co.il/en/israels-legal-tech-companies-2024-road-map/?utm\\_source](https://techlaw.co.il/en/israels-legal-tech-companies-2024-road-map/?utm_source) (last viewed on 2 March 2026).

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|  | <p>petitioners and empower them to independently pursue their claims and assert their rights pro se. This service is provided at no cost to the petitioner and with no eligibility threshold. The other form of assistance provides legal representation before judicial tribunals. In order to be eligible for this form of assistance, the petitioner must meet a set of eligibility requirements (see above).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private sector attorneys, including in-house counsel, participate in the Schar Mitzvah program, seeking<sup>17,18</sup></li> <li>• Non-profit organizations and NGOs.<sup>19</sup> Examples of leading NGOs that provide legal aid include ACRI (the Association for Civil Rights in Israel),<sup>20</sup> Adalah (the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel),<sup>21</sup> Kav LaOved (Worker's Hotline),<sup>22</sup> Naamat (Israel's Working Women's Organization),<sup>23</sup> HIAS (legal services for asylum seekers)<sup>24</sup> and Tebeka (legal aid for members of the Ethiopian community).<sup>25</sup></li> <li>• Latet Od serves as the connection point between Israel's civil sector and various legal services for the underprivileged. As part of this, Latet Od operates a legal pro bono clearinghouse, aiming to streamline and help expand the pro bono work of law firms in Israel.<sup>26</sup> Latet Od has also arranged pro bono services for the reservists community.<sup>27</sup></li> <li>• State-sponsored legal aid exists in two</li> </ul> |
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<sup>18</sup> The Israel Bar Association, "Schar Mitzvah", The Israel Bar Association Pro Bono Program, (May 20, 2010), [http://www.israelbar.org.il/english\\_inner.asp?pgId=75176&catId=372](http://www.israelbar.org.il/english_inner.asp?pgId=75176&catId=372) (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>19</sup> This includes cause-lawyering. In this chapter the term "cause-lawyering" refers to legal aid provided by attorneys who are paid, albeit not by a client, such as staff attorneys at NGOs.

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.english.acri.org.il/> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.adalah.org/en> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>22</sup> See <https://www.kavlaoved.org.il/en/> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>23</sup> See <https://naamat.org/> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>24</sup> See <https://hias.org.il/> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.tebeka.org.il/en/> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>26</sup> See - <https://www.latetod.org/> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>27</sup> <https://miluimnikim.org/en/#Reserve> (Last viewed on 3 March 2026).

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|  | <p>forms in Israel: The Legal Aid Department of the Ministry of Justice is charged with the administration of legal aid in civil matters, such as family and labor law and social benefit litigation.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, following the Swords of Iron war, the Legal Aid Department is now providing aid in various issues related to the terror attack and the war, in all various areas of law.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the Department collaborates with external, non-governmental attorneys, whose fees are paid for by the State Treasury.<sup>30</sup> The Office of the Public Defender is charged with providing legal aid in criminal cases.<sup>31</sup></p> |
| <p>15. Is there any public or private organization with which a local or foreign lawyer can register to be made aware of pro bono opportunities?</p> | <p>Local and foreign lawyers can register with the Israel Bar Association <i>Schar Mitzvah</i> program in order to be made aware of pro bono opportunities.</p> <p>They can also register with Latet Od, a pro bono clearinghouse with a dedicated platform for connecting pro bono cases with law firms and providing information and tools for managing pro bono programs.<sup>32</sup></p>  |
| <p>16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?</p>   | <p>The Israel Bar has in recent years began to grant awards to law firms which, and individuals who, have been particularly active in the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>  |

<sup>28</sup> Legal Aid Act 1972 and Legal Aid Regulation 1973. In 2011, the Legal Aid Department at the Ministry of Justice provided legal representation in approximately 200,000 legal proceedings. Ministry of Justice, Israel, Functions of the Legal Aid Department, available at <https://www.justice.gov.il/En/Guides/TheLegalAidDepartment/Pages/LegalAidDepartment-.aspx> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>29</sup> See Legal Aid Report 2022-2023 by the Ministry of Justice and Legal Aid chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/report-01-01-25/he/report-1-1-25.pdf (last visited January 28, 2025)

<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Justice, Israel, Functions of the Legal Aid Department, available at <https://www.justice.gov.il/En/Guides/TheLegalAidDepartment/Pages/LegalAidDepartment-.aspx> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>31</sup> <sup>31</sup> See <https://www.justice.gov.il/En/Units/PublicDefense/About/Pages/default.aspx> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

<sup>32</sup> See - <https://www.latetod.org/> (last visited on January 28, 2025).

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