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Photo by: COURTESY AVIV LENITZOLEI HASHOAH

Organization to set up centers to help survivors realize rights

By Lidar Gravé-Lazi
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Project will provide applicants with expert benefits adviser, senior lawyers for complex cases, all at no cost.

Aviv Lenitzolei Hashoah (Spring for Holocaust Survivors), a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Holocaust survivors in Israel realize their rights, and the Eshel Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)-Israel announced plans to open "rights centers" for Holocaust survivors in cities throughout the country.

The new project aims to establish 14 centers over the course of the next two years, in which Holocaust survivors and their relatives will be able to receive personal and professional advice and support in the community, including assistance in realizing all the rights and benefits to which they are entitled.

"Most survivors are unaware of the rights and benefits that can significantly improve their situation, and the purpose of the project is to reach them through the community and actively work to find them and help them utilize all the rights and benefits," said Aviva Silberman, founder and director of Aviv Lenitzolei Hashoah.

The collaboration aims to enable the survivors to work together with local authorities and the agencies responsible for realizing rights, which for many survivors reflects the difference between poverty and leading a life of dignity and well-being.

"We have no doubt that the enlistment of Eshel-JDC Israel and the local authorities for the good of the project will yield an improvement in the economic situation of thousands of Holocaust survivors," added Silberman.

Each center will provide applicants with an expert adviser from the organization in the field of rights, as well as the support of the organization's senior lawyers to treat complex cases. The centers will also provide monitoring and control services of the professional bodies in the municipality, and will train volunteers, staff, and working professionals in various institutions in the city in an effort to reach survivors and raise awareness of their rights. All the services will be provided at no cost to the survivors.

"Many resources are invested in assisting Holocaust survivors, but unfortunately they do not always reach the intended recipients due to a lack of accessibility.

The purpose of the project is to help some 180,000 Holocaust survivors and facilitate the utilization of their rights, whereby the process is accomplished by lawyers whose area of expertise is attaining these rights," said Prof. Yossi Tamir, CEO of Eshel JDC-Israel.

The new project, estimated to cost some NIS 3 million, will be funded by Eshel-JDC Israel and donations from Aviv Lenitzolei Hashoah, as well as assistance from the budget of participating municipalities.

The project has been operating as a pilot program for the past three years in five cities: Tel Aviv, Haifa, Kfar Saba, Ramat Hasharon, and Ramat Gan.

To date, hundreds of survivors have sought help from the experts at the centers and were able to receive benefits totaling several hundred thousand shekels.

"Holocaust survivors, their families, and caregivers can already today contact the organization and act to realize their rights at no cost on their part, through our website, www.avivshoah.co.il," added Silberman.

