



The Women's Employment Rights Clinic



***When are you planning to have another child?
How will you handle the long hours with a baby at home?***

These were just a few of the questions I was continuously faced with when applying for a job. I had just set out on my professional career as a lawyer and recently became a mother.

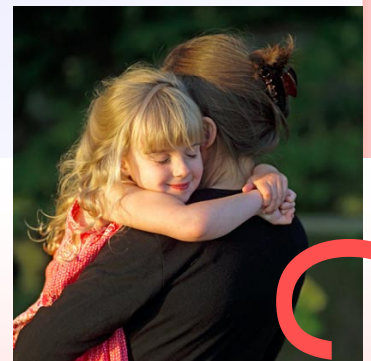
I was not alone. After my third maternity leave I returned to my job in an NGO dealing with women's rights where I constantly met women who were fired after becoming mothers, or could not find a job because they were pregnant or had children. I also gave advice to women who were sexually harassed and faced the dilemma whether to complain and lose their position or to remain silent and live with the abuse. Many told me that they tolerated sexual advances from the boss because as the only providers in the family and the lack of jobs available, they didn't dare say no. Those who refused were fired.

A woman who is being discriminated against, a woman who faces losing her job while pregnant or who is sexually harassed in her place of employment needs compassionate legal advice and representation. She needs support and constant counseling. When in distress women do not receive such assistance, they give up on their rights, feeling humiliated and victimized. I established the Clinic for Women's Employment Rights for three main reasons: to provide compassionate representation for those who do not have the financial means; to lead the path for change in the Israeli work environment; and to educate the future generation of lawyers towards acknowledging the rights of women in the workplace. We are only at the beginning, there is so much to accomplish, however together with the dedicated students of the Women's Employment Rights Clinic and the team of the CLE Center we have set the wheels in motion for bringing about change for all women in Israel.

***Maya Tzahor, Adv.
Director of the Women's Employment Rights Clinic***

Facts and Figures about the clinic

- ***Discrimination against women in the job market and in their work conditions.***
- ***Women's rights during pregnancy and after birth.***
- ***Sexual harassment in the workplace.***
- ***The Clinic operates an internet site which contains legal information on the subject and a Q&A forum.***
- ***The Clinic provides 150 counseling sessions per year.***
- ***The students answer over 1000 questions via the website per year.***
- ***The Clinic has instilled awareness among the weaker populations of their rights.***
- ***The Clinic influences policy makers.***
- ***Fifteen lawsuits have been submitted on behalf of women to the Labor courts every year.***
- ***about 40 cases per year are Negotiated with employers and result in compromise.***
- ***Our agenda is to focus on the client's best interest and on what she wants to achieve. In many cases, women do not want money. They just want to make the employer realize that what he did was wrong.***



***Yifat Aran
Clinic Coordinator, 4th year law student***

Cases of special interest:

Aviva, a single mother with financial difficulties was sexually harassed by her two male employers. Aviva suffered non-stop sexual harassment, in all forms, by her immediate boss. When she refused to have sex with him, she was fired for various 'reasons'.

When she came to the clinic, it soon became clear that Aviva had not only been harassed by her immediate boss, but also by one of the owners of the place. The Clinic, on her behalf, submitted a lawsuit to the Labor Law Court and the harassers were ordered to pay compensation in the sum of 150,000 NIS an unprecedented amount for suits of this type.

Dalya, a worker in the Knesset Guard was sexually harassed by her supervisor. After she filed a complaint, she was informed that the Knesset was alleviating itself of all responsibility and passing the matter over to the police, without her consent. Dalia wanted her place of employment of over a decade to investigate and protect her as stated by the law. The Clinic submitted a complaint, on her behalf, to the legal advisor of the Knesset and after a long struggle it was agreed that the case would be placed in the hands of an objective and credible public body that would investigate in accordance with the law. Dalia was satisfied with this decision. At her request the Clinic filed a civil law suit against the harasser. This case brought the matter of the victim of sexual harassment's right to choose the course of action that suits her. The employer's attempt to force a path for her was subject to media and public criticism.

Moran, a 19 year old, was fired during her pregnancy. Her employers claimed they did not know she was pregnant and gave various false reasons for her dismissal. After the employers' refusal to negotiate, the clinic filed a law suit and won 13,000 NIS, proving the dismissal illegal.

Last March I found out I was pregnant. At that time I realized I was going to lose the job I had for the previous 4 years. I felt helpless. In my attempts to seek help I came across the clinic. From that moment on, I felt strong and competent. I received legal guidance, a strong back to lean on and constant reassurance. I stopped feeling helpless because I knew I was not alone. They were with me all the way, until we won the case. Without Maya and the students, I would never have had the means to face the legal system. With a baby at home and another on the way, I found out pregnant women are worth less. The clinic's team made me trust again, and believe that for some people, helping others is a carrier. Thank you for everything.

Merav Levy

I believe that our clinic benefits all those involved. Firstly, of course, the women who come to understand their rights feel that they have fought back. Secondly, the students, who like I did, become more aware of the state of our society and what can be done to mend what is wrong and unjust. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to be a part of this important enterprise

Oran Rozenberg, 4th year law student



The passing year at the clinic was an amazing experience for me in terms of our ability to make a difference. I know there is still a long way ahead of us, but I feel we are taking part in a process of social change. I have learned the impact of a single letter to an employer on behalf of the client on the client's situation, on the effect of winning one case on the future similar cases.

Yaara Chimiya, 3rd year law student

Want to hear more about the CLE Center?

Planning a trip to Israel? We invite you to come on a tour of the Clinics!
Contact us: **Tel:** 972-2-5882554 **Cell:** 972-54-8820527 **Fax:** 972-2-5882544
E-mail: Law_clinics@savion.huji.ac.il **www.cle.huji.ac.il**

