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State Claims Israeli's Filipina Wife Is a Maid, Denies Her Legal Status

Rafi and Celia Yahel met in October 2004 when Celia was caring for the elderly mother of Rafi, a computer professional, they became a couple in 2005.

Dana Weiler-Polak | [Send me email alerts](#)

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A mixed-race couple who approached the Population and Immigration Authority with a request to grant legal status to the female partner, a Philippine citizen, by virtue of their relationship was turned down due to the absence of a joint household. However, after the request was submitted, the Immigration Authority notified them that the woman's visitor's permit would be rescinded because she is part of a couple in Israel.

Another request submitted by the couple after they were living together was again rejected, this time because of their joint household, which according to the authority indicated that the woman is only interested in obtaining a legal status while the Israeli man is interested in having a maid.

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Rafi and Celia Yahel. Credit: Moti Milrod

רטי? וות את שמל לחסוך

Rafi and Celia Yahel met in October 2004 when Celia was caring for the elderly mother of Rafi, a computer professional. A relationship developed and in 2005 they became a couple. In order to formalize their relationship, Celia contacted the Philippine authorities to pave the way to permit her marriage. This process took a long time and in the meantime, Rafi's mother died.

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Until the marriage was approved, the couple could not submit a request to obtain legal status. Therefore, in the absence of any other option, they decided that Celia would continue working as a home aide even when this meant living in the employer's home, to maintain her visa. She began working for an elderly man who lives nearby and the two would meet during her time off and on weekends, and maintained a close relationship.

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At a later stage, the couple prepared a partnership arrangement with the help of the New Family organization, signed a financial agreement and even opened a joint bank account. In late 2008, with the approval of the marriage, the couple prepared the necessary documents, to which they also attached photos from various trips abroad, and submitted a request to obtain residency status by virtue of their marriage. Celia did not want to harm her employer, to whom she had become close, and continued working and living in his home until a replacement could be found.

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In 2010 the couple married in the Philippines, and once receiving the relevant documents submitted an additional request for her to be granted legal status. Celia received a six-month permit to stay, which was periodically extended until the Population Authority completed its review of the case.

In May this year, a hearing was held on the couple's case. The interview was conducted in a noisy hall, mostly in Hebrew, the documentation of it was in Hebrew only and Celia was required to sign these documents. The hearing protocol presents some contradictions: When Celia was asked about Rafi's place of work, she answered in great detail noting his position, place of work and its location, but the summary in the protocol stated that "the party noted that she does not know where you work."

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Later on the Population Authority notified the couple that their request is rejected this time, "due to a limited impression of the sincerity of the relationship. It seems that the party is interested in obtaining a legal status in Israel and you are interested in her so that she can take care of you and your household."

"The Population Authority's claim that Mr. Yahel is interested in his wife as a housekeeper and that Mrs. Yahel is solely interested in her legal status was presented without any factual basis," says Attorney Adi Lustigman, who is representing the couple. "The unbearable lightness with which the decision was made does not correspond to the legal right to family life."

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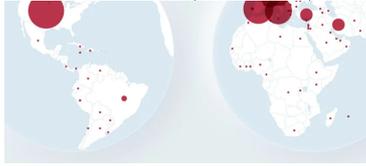
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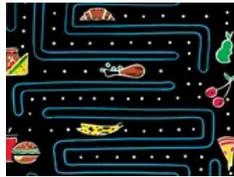
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