**Abstract special issue**: Military conflicts have a profound impact upon the mental health of involved communities. This special issue would like to invite articles that provide support and build a knowledge base for primary care providers, psychologists, social workers, teachers, caregivers, and any community members working with affected groups in mental health support and treatment in connection to war, trauma and migration.

**Short communications.** Short communications (formally called Brief reports) should not exceed 1500 words, including a 100-word abstract, 3 keywords, text, and references plus 1 table or 1 figure.

1. **Migrants from War to War: Israel 2023-2024**
2. **IDPs**
3. **Methods**
4. Understanding the Impact of Double Wars

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/psychiatry-research/publish/guide-for-authors>

**Title Page**

**Migrants from War to War: Israel 2023–-2024**

**Abstract:**

This preliminary study, based on interviews with 23 new immigrants, illuminates the added complexity and challenges that experiencing war in both the origin and destination countries brings to the immigration process. Their responses to double war experiences varied widely. Some displayed resilience and others grappled with stress and contemplated further migration. These findings emphasize that mental health support services must be adaptable and sensitive to the diverse experiences and coping mechanisms of immigrants facing the repercussions of double wars.

**Key words**: Double war, migration, mental health

1. **Introduction**

Ongoing and new conflicts have driven global forced human displacement. By mid-2023, 110 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, and violence (UNHCR, 2023). Several studies have documented the strong impact of pre- and post-migration on war-affected refugees’ mental health (Bogić et al., 2015; Hameed et al., 2018; Patanè et al., 2022). However, little is known about how experiencing war simultaneouslyin *both* the origin and destination countries affects immigrants or their coping strategies. This short communication highlights this phenomenon and its mental health implications.

**1.2** **Migrants from War to War**

Military conflicts have intensified in recent years, affecting the daily lives of local populations and immigrants (Bosqui & Marshoud, 2018; Elvevåg & DeLisi, 2022; Shevlin et al., 2022). The presence of war, conflicts, military activities, and militarism in Israel’s public and personal spheres is part of Israelis’ daily routine (Author1, 2024; Roei, 2012). Israel is also an immigrant country, with three-quarters of the population immigrants (*olim* in Hebrew) or children or grandchildren of immigrants (Author1 et al., 2018). Jewish immigrants from around the world receive citizenship in accordance with the country’s Law of Return,[[1]](#footnote-1) regardless of their age, health, wealth, professional skills, country of origin, or other criteria. *Olim* from conflict zones are defined as *refugee-olim*, a status giving them economic benefits beyond those granted to other *olim*.

*Olim* who have arrived since 2022 have experienced war in their origin countries (Ukraine, two Ethiopian regions, Belarus, and North India). Since an unexpected, deadly cross-border attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, Israel has also been at war, making the experience of two wars part of the daily lived experiences of new immigrants to Israel. According to our analysis of government data, between 2022 and August 2023, 13,806 immigrants arrived in Israel (refer to Table 1), among whom 84% are currently experiencing such double wars, either directly or indirectly (Author1 & Author2, 2023).

1. **Methods**

This study, part of a larger project, is based on observations and initial interviews carried out between November 2023–March 2024 with 23 new immigrants who arrived in Israel between 2022–2023. They were asked in detail about (a) their pre- and post-immigration experiences of war, (b) their feelings, (c) and the coping mechanisms they have adopted to navigate their daily lives in Israel. Each interview was conducted in the interviewee’s mother tongue, translated, and meticulously transcribed to facilitate a comprehensive and detailed qualitative analysis. All interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Watzlawik & Born, 2007). Each researcher spent a total of about one week in areas to which internally displaced people (IDPs) had been evacuated following the Gaza War, including new immigrants, to learn about their experiences and how they connected with immigration.

1. **Results: Preliminary insights**
   1. ***“We looked for security and got war”* (Natalia)**

Upon arriving in Israel, immigrants from origin countries at war unexpectedly experienced the October 7th outbreak of war. Still in the early stages of their absorption process, often described with optimism in the literature (Mirsky, 2009; Wong, 2002), they encountered typical complexities of settling into a new country, compounded by the stress induced by war. Absorption challenges, including cultural and linguistic differences, added to the stress, introduced additional hurdles, and affected their psychological well-being and adaptation processes.

* 1. ***Double crisis and/or double resilience***

The experience of a ‘double war’ prompted a variety of feelings and struggles among the new immigrants, with tension between fear and resilience omnipresent. Some described fears that intensified, exacerbating feelings they had from the war in their country of origin. Others felt that their prior experiences with war helped them in Israel. Yossef described:

*[When] I arrived in Israel, I got used to the new reality. Then suddenly, the [the war] started and returned my body to fear.”* Or, as Yana related: “*A war started here [but] I [had just run] away from a war! My family keeps telling me to… run away to a quiet place. I am thinking of what …to do.*

During the interviews, participants shared their methods of resilience. Some engaged with the media in their native languages to shape global perceptions of the conflict; others focused on supporting fellow immigrants and the thousands of military reservists by collecting donations essential to their welfare, an effort many described as deeply meaningful. Additionally, immigrants like Tatyana from Ukraine compared the relative calm felt during air raid sirens in Israel to her distress during air raids in Kyiv:

*In Kyiv, it was difficult. Here, it feels like a child’s game. I go to work every day, and my daughter goes to school. If there’s an alarm (which happens a few times a day), I’m okay [because] we both have access to a [bomb] shelter*.

* 1. ***Various shades of ongoing displacement***

The war created ongoing and varied patterns of migration for most of the immigrants. Some chose to stay in Israel; others became internally displaced in Israel; others chose to leave; still others are considering whether to stay. Some have found themselves among Israel’s IDPs, moving from place to place, finding themselves in a state of homelessness, feeling personal and human insecurity arising from their status as both refugees and displaced persons, affecting their mental well-being in everyday experiences. While their arrival in Israel can be seen as the fulfillment of the Zionist ideal, the daily reality is that level, both their homes of origin and their new national homes are in crisis.

*When we arrived in Israel from Gondar, our homes were in an absorption center. When the war started, we quickly left the area [and have now] been living in a hotel… for more than two months… Because of the war, we [had to leave] our first home in Israel. We will surely return, but in the meantime, we have to get used to everything [again – like going] to new schools* (Joseph).

* 1. ***Transnationalism – Ties with family and friends***

As with most immigrants, those interviewed have family and social ties in their origin countries that have alsobeen affected directly or indirectly by war. The concerns expressed in the preliminary interviews relate both to the daily life of their families and friends in the origin country and to concerns related to war there. Marina from Ukraine observed: “*When a missile falls in Kharkiv, the impact waves are clearly heard in Ashdod[[2]](#footnote-2).*” Sarah from Ethiopia explained: “When I try to call my daughter in Gondar and there’s no internet for several days, I don’t know what to worry about anymore – the war here or the war there?”.

Additionally, some new immigrants worried about the property left behind in their country of origin. Alex from Odessa feared financial loss: “*I left my big house, my summer house and everything there and I hope I will [recover] this …later.*”

Concurrently, their families and friends living in the origin countries have new existential concerns for those now experiencing war in Israel. As Yulia describes, “*When war broke out in Israel, I received endless calls telling me to get out of Israel, especially because I have a little girl. The pressure from the family was very great…*.”

The interviews depicted reshaping their family and social ties amidst two wars and across two or more countries. Some relationships grew stronger, while others weakened or even fractured, profoundly shaking the ties that had formerly sources that once represented sources of support.

1. **Discussion**

The interviews conducted for this preliminary study depict the varied impacts of war in their countries of origin and in Israel on new immigrants’ personal lives, community engagement, and relationships, highlighting the complexity that the experience of double wars adds to the already challenging experience of immigration. Nonetheless, the interviewees exhibited a wide range of responses, some demonstrating resilience and others struggling with the stress and considering yet another migration. The consequences for mental health are diverse, suggesting that interventions should be tailored to dynamic cultural and national contexts

**Table 1:** Immigrants from eight countries, 2022–2023

**\* as of August 30, 2023**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Number of Immigrants 2023\*** | **Number of Immigrants 2022** | **Total Immigrants** | **Percentage of Total Immigrants** |  |
| Russia | 28,007 | 43,584 | 71,591 | 63% |  |
| Ukraine | 1,822 | 15,037 | 16,859 | 15% |  |
| Ethiopia | 1,668 | 1,512 | 3,180 | 3% |  |
| Belarus | 1,498 | 2,192 | 3,690 | 3% |  |
| India | 16 | 301 | 317 | 0% |  |
| **Percentage of all Immigrants** | **33,011** | **62,626** | **9563700%** | **84%** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

Source: Ministry of Aliyah and Integration

**References**

Author1. (2024).

Author1, & Author2. (2023).

Author1 et al. (2018).

Bogić, M., Njoku, A., & Priebe, S. (2015). Long-term mental health of war-refugees: A systematic literature review. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-015-0064-9>

Bosqui, T. J., & Marshoud, B. (2018). Mechanisms of change for interventions aimed at improving the wellbeing, mental health and resilience of children and adolescents affected by war and armed conflict: a systematic review of reviews. *Conflict and health*, *12*, 1–17.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Elvevåg, B., & DeLisi, L. E. (2022). The mental health consequences on children of the war in Ukraine: A commentary. *Psychiatry Research*, *317*, 114798.

Hameed, S., Sadiq, A., & Din, A. U. (2018). The increased vulnerability of refugee population to mental health disorders. *Kansas Journal of Medicine*, *11*(1), 20.

Mirsky, J. (2009). Mental health implications of migration. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, *44*(3), 179–187. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-008-0430-1>

Patanè, M., Ghane, S., Karyotaki, E., Cuijpers, P., Schoonmade, L., Tarsitani, L., & Sijbrandij, M. (2022). Prevalence of mental disorders in refugees and asylum seekers: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Global Mental Health*, *9*, 250–263.

Roei, N. (2012). Shifting sights: civilian militarism in Israeli art and visual culture.

Shevlin, M., Hyland, P., Karatzias, T., Makhashvili, N., Javakhishvili, J., & Roberts, B. (2022). The Ukraine crisis: Mental health resources for clinicians and researchers. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *27*(3), 521–523.

UNHCR. (2023). *Mid-year trends 2023*. U. N. H. C. f. Refugees.

Watzlawik, M., & Born, A. (2007). *Capturing identity: Quantitative and qualitative methods*. University Press of America.

Wong, D. F. K. (2002). Stage-specific and culture-specific coping strategies used by mainland Chinese immigrants during resettlement in Hong Kong: A qualitative analysis. *Social Work in Health Care*, *35*(1-2), 479–499.

1. **The Law of Return grants automatic citizenship to individuals with at least one Jewish grandparent and their spouses.** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ashdod, Israel’s sixth largest city is 32 km from the Gaza border. Approximately 30% of its inhabitants, like Marina, are immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Index Ruppin, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)