



Dear Friends,

If you've been following the Israeli press lately, you've likely learned about two very troubling events involving discrimination against members of the Ethiopian Israeli community. I wanted to bring you up to speed on what has happened and update you on Tebeka's response to these disturbing incidents.



The first incident involved an Ethiopian Israeli couple who sought to purchase an apartment in the city of Kiryat Malachi. Astonishingly, they were turned away because of a formal agreement among several homeowners associations that actually prohibited the sale of property to Israelis of Ethiopian descent.

*An Ethiopian Israeli student protesting*

As news of this outrageous conduct spread throughout the community and country, demonstrators by the hundreds came out in Kiryat Malachi, as well as in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, where 5,000 Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian Israelis joined together to demand an end to discrimination. It was an incredible sight to behold, despite our reason for being there.



Behind the scenes, Tebeka helped secure permits for the rallies, provided legal counsel and strategic guidance to the organizers, helped them sharpen their message and secured buses for the protesters. Tebeka also initiated contact with the city's mayor and members of the Knesset, as well as petitioned the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General to look into the incident.

*Protesters in Jerusalem*

As a result, the Attorney General's office has launched a formal investigation to determine whether members of the homeowners associations should be brought up on criminal charges that include incitement to racism. In addition, the Knesset's Immigration and Absorption Committee held a hearing on the treatment of Ethiopian Israelis in Kiryat Malachi, which was attended by over 20 MKs, representatives from several other Ministries, community leaders and activists. Following opening remarks by MK Danny Danon, I was asked to lead off the discussion by providing an update and analysis for the Committee. I stressed that lax law enforcement and leniency toward perpetrators of these sorts of crimes were contributing factors leading up to the events in Kiryat Malachi and

made two requests:

- 1) That the Israeli law of "lashon hara" (slander) be applied in cases of slander against an entire community
- 2) That there be a law forbidding private real estate sellers to discriminate against buyers on ethnic grounds



The second incident occurred on a school bus headed to the Mevaseret Tzion Absorption Center, when the driver of the bus hurled ugly racial epithets at a group of Ethiopian Israeli schoolgirls (one of whom actually had the wherewithal to record the driver's tirade on her cell phone). In response, Tebeka sent a demand letter to the bus company insisting that the driver be fired and received a reply two days later indicating that he had been.

*The six graders, victim of racist slur*

Another letter was sent to the Education Director at Mevaseret Tzion demanding that the bus company's contract be terminated and that steps be taken to ensure that such an incident never happens again. Just a few days ago, Tebeka attorneys met with the girls' parents in order to gather as much information as possible before filing a suit. Meanwhile, we have asked the Ministry of Transportation to launch its own criminal investigation into the bus driver's actions.

Moreover, as I write this letter, an additional "all-Ethiopian" school has been discovered in Netanya, where non-Ethiopian parents have received authorization from the municipality to send their children to schools outside of their district.

As troubling as these events have been, I am nonetheless encouraged by the outpouring of support the community has received from fellow Israeli citizens, lawmakers and the media. Racial and ethnic discrimination have absolutely no place in our beloved country, and only through continued vigilance can we hope to ensure that no Israelis are ever treated as second-class citizens in the State of Israel.

I will keep you abreast of events as they continue to unfold. As always, thank you for supporting Tebeka's legal aid and advocacy work, and for partnering with us to build a much brighter future for the Ethiopian Israeli community. For further reading and to make your donation, please visit [our website](#).

Sincerely,  
Itzik Dessie

**Tebeka - Advocacy for Equality & Justice for Ethiopian-Israelis**