

# ISRAEL: New report says poor giving up on nutritious food

A new Israeli government report has said a third of the population has stopped buying vital nutritious food and is using any spare cash to pay for such things as utility bills.

TEL AVIV, 13 April 2008 (IRIN) - The Ministry of Welfare, based on information from Israel's National Insurance Institute (NII), one of the backbones of the state's welfare system, released a poverty report on 1 April showing that 34 percent of citizens no longer bought vegetables and other nutritious foods, as their priority was to pay bills such as rent and electricity.

The report, in Hebrew only, is entitled The Inter-Ministerial Committee for Examining the Responsibility of the State for Ensuring the Food Security of its Citizens, and the NII data it uses does not include Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory, where food insecurity is more widespread.

"Israel must maintain its status as a welfare state and solve the issue of food insecurity for its citizens," said Yitzhak Herzog, the welfare minister.

The report spoke of "levels of food insecurity reaching worrying proportions".

The greatest need was recorded amongst Ultra Orthodox Jews, over half of whom lived in poverty, leading to reliance on charities. Some 37 percent of the Arab minority also needed help in keeping healthy food on the table.

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