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Paradise Lost



Fiji Photo: Visual Photos

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3 Israelis evicted from paradise

Three Israelis told by Fijian immigration officer that they cannot enter country for mistreating Palestinians during military service

Itamar Eichner

Three Israeli backpackers were evicted from Fiji after a Muslim immigration officer ruled that they had humiliated Palestinians during their military service in the territories.

The three – Amit Ronen, Eldar Avracohen, and Nimrod Lahav – left Israel in February for a tour in Australia.

In July they decided to spend a week in Fiji. On July 13 they arrived at Fiji airport where a surprise awaited them.

"We gave our passports to the officer, and when she saw we are Israelis she asked for ID cards. We told her we don't understand why we need ID cards and she responded shouting: 'You know very well how to ask Palestinians for IDs and humiliate them for three years.'"

That's what Avracohen wrote in a complaint letter he sent to Israel's Ambassador to Australia Nati Tamir.

The three were held at Fiji airport for six hours and officials rebuked their pleas to be allowed to make a phone call.

Armed policemen took them to a cell at the airport where they spent the night before being sent back to Australia.

"I don't look like a terrorist and there is no reason to point a gun at me," Nimrod Lahav wrote in a letter to ambassador Tamir.

Avracohen wrote that the incident was the most humiliating experience he had ever gone through.

The Foreign Ministry said the matter is being dealt with.

[Back](#)

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