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Business owners in north can't get special loans because they aren't Jews

By [Jack Khoury](#)

A business development center that works under the auspices of the Industry, Trade and Labor Ministry has offered special loans for small businesses in the north, but it is making the special offer only to those businesses that are owned by Jews and former soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces.

The ministry said that the criteria for eligibility was determined by the owners of a private foundation that is funding the project.

At the end of the Lebanon war, the MATI organization announced it was offering special loans to residents of northern towns, which had suffered great damage when Hezbollah rockets hit homes and businesses.

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A few Israeli Arab business owners who checked the loans for businesses in the Galilee happened upon a great deal: MATI was offering a NIS 45,000 loan, which will be paid back with no interest over a reasonable amount of time.

But the businessmen checked the criteria for eligibility for the loan and saw that it was intended only for Jews and ex-IDF troops.

The Musawa legal center has filed a complaint with the ministry several business owners complained over the criteria for the loan. The center's legal councilor has demanded to give business owners equal opportunities to take out the loans.

The head of the center has said the criteria are discriminatory and are in violation of laws against discrimination in public services and High Court rulings that state a body being funded by the government must not discriminate on the basis of nationality, religion, race or sex

He says, if MATI does not change the criteria for the loan, the center will file civil law suits in the name of several businesses in the north.

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Syrian arms shipments to Hezbollah

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