Visiting Professor Offers A Response To Human Trafficking
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In the 1990s, Israel became an important destination for international human trafficking, with thousands of people brought into the country to work in prostitution, agriculture, construction, and healthcare. But within the last few years, that traffic has largely been stopped by a combination of prosecution, protection, and academic research, including the work of Daphna Hacker, who has documented the experiences of men and women living in state-run shelters.

“ Compared to other countries around the world, Israel really does offer a unique response,” said Hacker, a member of the Tel Aviv University Faculty of Law and visiting professor at Cornell Law, sharing her research in “Sheltering Survivors of Human Trafficking: Lessons from the Israeli Experience” on September 24. “We have a framework of state-funded and state-regulated shelters that are specifically for victims of human trafficking. That assistance is not conditioned on cooperation with the authorities, and there is a comprehensive basket of services to provide for residents’ basic needs, including housing, food, medical treatment, legal aid, therapeutic assistance, and work permits.”

Still, many problems continue, which Hacker and co-author Orna Cohen explored at length in a research report presented to the U.S. State Department. Starting in 2007, the State Department’s annual ratings were an essential tool in persuading Israel to take action, and for Hacker, the United States needs to remain a critical part of preventing trafficking and assisting its victims.

“I would like the United States to continue pressuring Israel, to be reflective of its own problems with human trafficking, and to make itself a model for rehabilitation,” said Hacker. “It’s not just about policing, but about being a positive role model for the world.”

Following her talk, Hacker returned to Tel Aviv University, where she teaches family law, feminist jurisprudence, and qualitative methods. “Daphna Hacker’s research on Israel’s shelters helps to illuminate what is needed to assist and rehabilitate survivors of human trafficking,” said Elizabeth Brundige, executive director of Cornell Law School’s Avon Global Center for Women and Justice, which co-hosted Hacker’s talk with the Dorothea S. Clarke Program in Feminist Jurisprudence. “Having her here at Cornell, sharing her ideas and strategies, has been an eye-opening, inspiring, and galvanizing experience.”

-- Kenneth Berkowitz