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## Call for gov't to permit private adoptions

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THE government has a monopoly on adoption, is not in tune with new developments in the process elsewhere, and is causing needless suffering for those who go abroad to adopt, a leading expert in social services charged yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference in Jerusalem, Prof. Eliezer Jaffe, of the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work at Hebrew University, summed up a year of research he had done into adoption both here and abroad, and called for the authorities to both permit and promote private adoptions.

The last 20 years has seen a

sharp and continuing drop in the number of babies being offered for adoption in Europe and the US, he said.

An increasing number of couples are looking for babies in the Third World. The practice has not only gained acceptance, but has generated a network of related support groups and services, Jaffe said, holding aloft a manual entitled *How to Adopt from Central and South America*, produced by a non-profit organization in the US. He also showed slides describing a private adoption agency started by

a couple who had themselves gone to Korea to find a baby.

Here, however, people pursuing private adoptions such as these are made to feel like criminals, he said.

Ella Blass, deputy director of the Adoption Service, responded to Jaffe's call for private adoption by saying, "we don't want to do business in babies."

She said a joint proposal by the Justice Ministry and Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to change the law and allow and support adoption from abroad would be

presented in March. But such adoptions would still have to be arranged through the government service.

The Adoption Service gets about 800 requests for adoption a year, and the average wait for a baby is six years, she said. Jaffe maintained the real number of Israelis seeking to adopt a baby runs into the thousands, but either they don't meet the service's criteria or they prefer to look elsewhere rather than wait.

Blass said about 100 "normal" babies are put up for adoption here every year, along with 120 "special needs" children.