



הסוכנות היהודית
לארץ ישראל
JEWISH AGENCY
FOR ISRAEL

Every one of us, together.

Emergency in Israel

Emergency Update on Jewish Agency Programming

May 16, 2021

The recent violent events that have erupted across the country have left us all surprised and stunned: clashes with Palestinians in Jerusalem and on the Temple Mount; the deteriorating security tensions and the massive barrage of missiles from Gaza on southern and central Israel; and the outbreak of unprecedented violence, destruction, and lynching in mixed cities and Arab communities.

To say that the situation is particularly challenging is an understatement. We must all deal with the consequences of the current tensions. Many of us are protecting family, coworkers, or people under our charge while missiles fall on our heads night and day, forcing us to seek shelter. We have all witnessed the unbearable sights of rioting, beating, and arson by Arab and Jewish extremists in Lod, Ramla, Acre, Kfar Qassem, Bat Yam, Holon, and other places.

As an organization that has experienced hard times of war and destruction, as well as periods of prosperity and peace, it is our duty to rise up and make a clear statement: we will support and assist populations hit by missile fire as we did in the past, after the Second Lebanon War and after Operations Cast Lead and Protective Edge. Together with our partners, we will mobilize to heal and support the communities and populations affected by the fighting. Our Fund for Victims of Terror is already providing assistance to bereaved families. When the situation allows it, we will provide more extensive assistance to localities and communities that have suffered damage and casualties.

At the same time, we will remind ourselves and those around us that we will not be subdued by hatred. As an organization, we work hand in hand with all sectors of the Israeli population: Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze. We are all partners. We all stand together against the evil wind that is sweeping the country today. But when it subsides—as it must—we will be among the first to repair its damages. After all, lest we forget, we are brothers and sisters.

It is important to note that many of The Jewish Agency's P2G partnerships are also active in the Arab and Druze sectors. In Central Galilee, Western Galilee, Yokneam-Megiddo, Beit She'an-Emek HaMa'ayanot, our partnerships include joint activities with Arab and Druze communities. In addition, some of our *mechinot* (pre-army academies) enroll members of diverse groups within Israeli society and engage in activities with them. Our Youth Futures national program serves dozens of Arab, Druze, and Bedouin families across the country and employs a number of staff from those communities. In more general terms, we draw encouragement from the large number of initiatives that our staff is organizing to promote and strengthen coexistence and reconciliation all over the land.

We must stay optimistic! We will make it through this difficult period and, as we have done in the past, help the entire Israeli society rise to the challenge and look with renewed hope to a common future: a future of solidarity between the Jewish people abroad and in Israel, and among all threads of the rich fabric that is Israeli society.

Update on our response:

As we have done in the past, we concentrate our crisis response in three sectors:

- **Jewish Agency beneficiaries who depend on us 24/7 for their protection, safety, and security.** This includes the 7,800 olim (immigrants) in our Absorption Centers, about 3,900 of whom are in southern Israel; about 7,000 elderly people in our Amigour subsidized housing facilities; thousands of at-risk youth and their families in our Youth Futures program; additional hundreds of youth at risk who live in our youth villages around the country; and hundreds of our employees and their families. All of this is in addition to thousands of participants in our educational initiatives, including our mechinot and Israel experience programs (mainly Masa).
- **Assistance to the broader Israeli society- to those in special need during the crisis.** This includes families who receive aid through the Fund for Victims of Terror, which provides immediate financial assistance to Israelis who have been impacted by violence; initiatives promoted by the National Emergency Authority and inter-ministerial bodies, such as days of respite and recreation for residents (especially children) from affected areas; motivated volunteers all over the country; small businesses in affected areas; and more.
- **Mobilizing Global solidarity movements with communities and partners from the Jewish world.** Through our global network of about 300 shlichim (Israel emissaries) around the world (with another 1,250 leaving to work in global summer camps despite the current situation) and our network of partnerships with communities and organizations (P2G), we work to prepare briefings and organize solidarity events.

Of course, we are also constantly on the lookout for anti-Semitic and anti-Israel activities, including hate speech, demonstrations, and other activities that place our shlichim and our program participants in danger, so that we can take necessary action.

We hold meetings of our 'Emergency organizational table' at least once a day (sometimes more) to assess the impact of the crisis on each of the sectors above, identify needs, and provide solutions.

By virtue of its special status in Israel, The Jewish Agency is a partner in all the major national forums that monitor crisis situations, including the National Emergency Authority, the Home Front Command, and Melach (an inter-ministerial emergency response body). We work in close cooperation with these organizations and receive hourly updates.

Below is a summary of our response for each of the three sectors discussed above. This is an evolving situation, of course, and we will provide additional updates every few days.

Sector 1: Beneficiaries for whom we are responsible 24/7

Aliyah

For olim in areas affected by the violence, having 15 to 45 seconds to run to shelters—often with small children—while whistling missiles and loud bombings surround them is a whole new experience. This frightening ordeal comes at a time when most have yet to learn Hebrew or acclimate culturally. Moreover, many new immigrants, who were already in a precarious financial situation, are unable to work due to the crisis and are losing much-needed income.

We are reinforcing our teams of absorption center staff and social workers to take care



Photo: Brit Milah of olim from Zur Israel that was performed in a shelter due to the constant sirens

of immigrants, even on weekends and during the Shavuot holiday, to ensure they have the emotional and practical support they need and to help them lead as normal a life as possible despite the missiles and the stress. Our staff is doing everything possible to provide moments of respite and relaxation to immigrants of all ages, and we are offering workshops and individual guidance by professionals to provide recent immigrants with an effective therapeutic response. For those immigrants who have suffered physical and/or financial damage, we do everything we can to help them get their lives back on track, including grants to help replace lost income. We have distributed tablets and offered WiFi access so that children can continue to learn, and are helping olim in need purchase food and necessary supplies. In our shelters, we have brought in reinforced security staff and new equipment to keep olim as safe and comfortable as possible. To view the visit of Isaac Herzog, Chair of the Executive in the Absorption center in Ashkelon, [click here](#)

Amigour

Over 3,000 seniors living in Amigour housing facilities—including many Holocaust survivors—are currently under fire. Elderly residents spend many hours in shelters, and Amigour does everything it can to help them. We have increased staff hours and have distributed food packages including dairy products, fruits and vegetables, eggs, and preserves. In addition, social workers are providing emotional assistance. Before the Shavuot holiday, we will distribute thousands of challahs and cheesecakes to lift residents' spirits.



Photo: Amigour food package distribution

Youth Villages

Every year, The Jewish Agency's six youth villages offer essential services and a stable, caring environment for living and studying to some 1,000 youth ages 12 to 18 from challenging backgrounds. Youth villages give these disadvantaged young people the chance to break the cycle of poverty and social marginalization and help ensure their integration into Israeli society as involved, productive citizens.

- **Kiryat Yearim.** For the time being, Kiryat Yearim students are not leaving the youth village for any outdoor activities. Shelters are always open during school hours. Most students at Kiryat Yearim live in the conflict area: Ashkelon, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Malachi, Netivot, Sderot, Ofakim, Be'er Sheva, and Dimona. The youth village has invited parents, graduates, and students the opportunity to stay together at the village.
- **Hadassah Neurim.** Currently, the 300 students in the youth village are scheduled to go home for the Shavuot holiday. About 40 will remain in the village. We invited students who live in Tel Aviv and southern Israel to remain in the village and offered for their families to join us. We also suggested to other youth villages that are in the line of fire to send us groups for respite.
- **Ben Yakir.** The Emek Hefer Regional Council, where Ben Yakir is located, has canceled school due to the situation in the northern Sharon. There was panic in the youth village yesterday. Students were startled by the noise of the Iron Dome interceptions and were concerned for their families across the country. Most of the students have been evacuated as of Thursday.
- **Ramat Hadassah.** At Ramat Hadassah, tension is mostly in feelings and thoughts. Staff holds regular dialogue with the children. In preparation for the holiday weekend, the students were invited to remain in the village and their families were invited to join.

Youth Futures

Youth Futures provides holistic intervention to youth and families at risk through the efforts of Mentors, who are trusted figures in the community. The program operates in 37 localities throughout Israel, many of which are experiencing violence. In the southern localities and those that are near the Gaza Strip, our staff and beneficiaries spend most of the day inside protected spaces, under heavy and incessant fire. Our Mentors, who are quite used to similar situations, were able to immediately activate a procedure in which they contact all of the children and families in their care to map their needs and refer children who need guidance to appropriate professionals.

Our program also works in many mixed cities, serving both Jews and Arabs. In some of these cities, there is hostility and violence in the streets and/or missile attacks. In these communities, we must be especially sensitive to the challenges, emotions, and experiences of diverse community members. Youth Futures staff creates a safe space for children to share their feelings and thoughts. We also educate them that violence is never the solution, even when we are angry and upset, and that it is important to exercise judgment and avoid behaviors that endanger them.

From the very start of the crisis, Mentors have reached out to families to immediately learn about and address their needs, even during Shavuot and the Muslim Eid holiday. When the holidays are over, Mentors will meet to discuss how to open dialogue and heal wounds among the families they serve.

Masa

We currently have more than 7,000 participants spending two months to a year in Israel on 150-plus study, volunteer, and internship programs throughout the country. The past 48 hours have been very challenging for them. Masa is working around the clock to monitor the security situation and support Masa Fellows, 100 of whom live in the south of Israel and have been under heavy rocket fire since Monday. Another 1,500 participants, who live in the Dan and Judean Foothills districts, have also been greatly impacted by the recent turmoil. Masa has worked quickly to move students in especially tense areas (including those in Haifa and near the Gaza Strip) to safety and to adjust program plans in response to the crisis.

We plan to provide Masa Fellows with grants for an overnight trip that will help offset the high stress of the past few days and offer them a space to enjoy themselves with their Masa community. Israelis are prepared for this kind of high-stress environment, but it is all new for our participants from around the world, who are far from their families. The overnight trip will relieve stress while connecting our Fellows to their Masa community, providing them with a space to share, learn, and grow.

Sector 2: Service to the Broader Israeli Society - Individuals and Businesses Receiving Crisis Assistance



The Fund for Victims of Terror

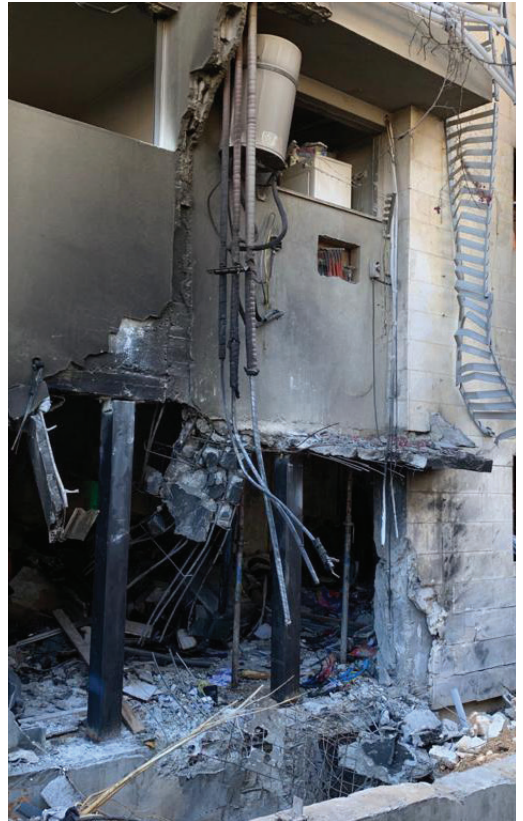
Through the Fund for Victims of Terror (FVOT), The Jewish Agency stands ready to assist, providing immediate financial assistance to those whose homes or persons were directly hit. We remain in constant contact with hospitals and municipal welfare services to help Israelis who have been impacted by terror as quickly as possible. Since the beginning of the current crisis, we have provided direct assistance to 44 households in total, including the families of six people that were killed and six that were injured. The families are located in Givatayim (11), Ashkelon (14), Sha'ar Hanegev (1), Sderot (2), Ashdod (4), Rishon Lezion (4), Barkat (2), Yehud (1), and Lod (1). We have also assisted one Indian citizen. [Click here](#) to see a recipient of the Victims of Terror Fund

Rehabilitating homes and buildings damaged by missile fire – by Amigour

In addition to providing subsidized housing (discussed above), Amigour helps rehabilitate homes and buildings damaged by missile fire, according to property tax guidelines. Amigour takes action shortly after the building is damaged to help families return home as quickly as possible. Despite the risks, staff travels to the affected site as soon as possible to assess the damage and help families find temporary living situations.

Wings – Special assistance to lone soldiers

The Jewish Agency's Wings program provides comprehensive guidance and support to young immigrants who enlist in the IDF as lone soldiers. About 1,200 such olim enlist in the IDF each year, and at any given time Wings is assisting about 3,500 young people who are currently in the IDF or are up to three years post-service. These brave young adults came to Israel without supportive networks of family or friends to defend the Jewish homeland, and we do everything we can to help them, during quieter times and in times of crisis. Wings coordinates the Lone Soldiers Forum, which unites the efforts of various organizations that help lone soldiers.



During the current crisis, we reached to all Wings participants to help them access temporary housing, assistance grants, and therapeutic care. We are distributing grants of up to 500 NIS to those who need it and provide emotional support both through our own professionals and through other organizations and government ministries. For soldiers who live or are serving in the south, we have offered them the opportunity to stay at our Ulpan Etzion facility in Jerusalem.

Together with our government partners, we are assessing steps including days of respite and volunteer activities. As we have done in the past, The Jewish Agency will join such initiatives as they are approved.

Sector 3: Mobilizing Global Solidarity Movements

The Jewish Agency's impact extends to communities around the world, through the efforts of our global network of shlichim as well as our P2G communities and other partners in dozens of countries. We work to keep Jews around the globe connected to Israel and Israelis, during peace as well as during times of crisis.

Shlichut

The Jewish Agency's *shlichim* (Israel emissaries) around the world are working tirelessly to keep their communities informed about the evolving crisis and gather support for Israel, even as many of their families in Israel are under attack. The Adelson Shlichut Institute and our shlichut staff were quick to arrange in-depth briefings with top-level experts, to distribute educational and informational resources, and to connect shlichim and their campuses and communities with knowledgeable speakers, all in multiple languages. Our staff in the shlichut unit helps bolster the personal and emotional resilience of shlichim around the



world through regular phone calls and WhatsApp messages, and keeps shlichim up to date about the situation and The Jewish Agency's responses so they can share this information with the communities they serve.

In the coming days, we will organize a briefing to update community and organization partners about the situation. Shlichim are also participating in community solidarity events, sending out regular briefings to federations, and organizing events/conversations for educators and others to address various complicated aspects of the crisis (such as relations between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens).

Shlichim are the main connectors between world Jewry and Israel. As such, they are organizing community solidarity events and organizing conversations that address various complicated aspects of the crisis (such as relations between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens) and bring authentic voices from the field.

Partnership2Gether (P2G)

P2G connects 450 Jewish and Israeli communities in 46 city-to-city and region-to-region partnerships, engaging more than 350,000 participants each year in meaningful ongoing connections between Israelis and Jews around the world, through unique programs and one-on-one encounters. These include school twinning programs, which bring Israeli and Diaspora students and teachers together for immersive, collaborative learning.

During the current crisis, our partnership cities and regions have reached out to offer their unwavering support and express their grief and concern. Some communities are partnered with cities in the south that are under fire, and others with mixed cities experiencing Jewish-Arab violence. In northern Israel, a number of our partnerships include activities for non-Jewish youth, who have appreciated the Jewish community's expressions of care and support for them. It is heartening to see, amidst the current conflict, Jews and Arabs standing together against violence and choosing to live together in tolerance and coexistence.



Photo: Masada College students in Sydney Australia send a warm and loving hug to their school twinning program in Aliza Begin school, Migdal Ha'Emek.

In all of our partnership communities, there have been rallies, letters to politicians and the media in support of Israel, expressions of solidarity on social media, and Zoom and in-person briefings and conversations. Examples include:

- Support marches in Cleveland (partner: Beit She'an), Columbus (Kfar Saba), Baltimore (Ashkelon), and more.
- A number of partnerships have held Zoom meetings with members of The Jewish Agency's Israeli team, who provide on-the-ground perspectives on the situation.
- The Venezuelan community sent a letter of support, as have many others.
- Many schools participating in the twinning program have sent videos and messages of support, for example a school in Rochester (partner: Modi'in).
- Several partners attended a Zoom briefing with Jewish Agency Chairman Isaac Herzog and Deputy Chairman Yaron Shavit.
- A volunteer project through AMEN, a program supported by the Baltimore-Ashkelon partnership that educates the youth of Ashkelon with the values of giving, tolerance, respect, and acceptance through volunteerism. AMEN volunteers are currently active in 35 shelters to keep children occupied and relaxed despite the barrage of missiles falling outside.

- In Dallas, the community organized a website where individuals can upload photos or videos in support of their partnership communities of Akko and Matteh Asher, as well as the rest of Israel.

Around the World

Jews around the world are watching the situation with concern, particularly those who are considering Aliyah. In many countries, anti-Israel protests have erupted, and anti-Semitic rhetoric has flared. The Jewish Agency's staff works tirelessly to share updates on the crisis with community members, leaders, and members of the media; counter misinformation; and provide support and solidarity.



Photo: Rally of Support for Israel in Cleveland

- **Former Soviet Union (FSU).** Shlichim, educational staff, and Aliyah representatives incorporate discussions of the current crisis into our *ulpanim* (immersive Hebrew courses), counselor training programs, Aliyah activities, and more. In early June, we are planning a Moscow Jewish Salon and a Forum of Community Representatives, where the Israeli ambassador will address the situation. Additional meetings with community representatives will take place during missions scheduled for June.
- **Germany.** Jewish Agency programs—including the annual conference of Nevatim (our Jewish identity and leadership program for young adults), online educational sessions, and a meeting an umbrella organization for Jewish nonprofits—have included discussions of the crisis. In addition, as part of a training program for young media activists in Germany, we are designing a special seminar for journalists and social media influencers to gain tools for addressing the current crisis. The seminar will likely be held in partnership with the *Jerusalem Post*.
- **South Africa.** Former IDF General Amos Yadlin participated in an event to inform members of the community. The local community has placed ads in support of Israel in the local media and, together with The Jewish Agency, organized a candle-lighting event to express solidarity.
- **Australia.** Shlichim organized an initiative for members of local Jewish youth movements to send letters in support of Israel to Australian politicians. Michael Oren, former Israeli ambassador to the United States, will hold a Zoom to update the community and its leaders next week.
- **New Zealand.** The local Jewish federation and shlichim held a well-attended event in support of Israel.
- **Argentina.** Jewish Agency representatives organized an event in Buenos Aires that drew over 300 people and have held two community update events, including one with journalist Enrique Zimmerman, that were open to all Latin American communities.
- **Mexico.** Community members participated in the Zoom with Enrique Zimmerman and local Zionist youth movement members created a video in support of Israel.
- **United Kingdom.** Jewish students have received booklets on coping with anti-Semitism and anti-Israel propaganda, and have the opportunity to speak with shlichim about their emotions and

concerns. Jewish Agency representatives organized a widely attended Zoom lecture on the crisis and are planning an Erev Shavuot event that will include a discussion of current events and prayers of peace for Israel.

- **Norway.** Shlichim have led community update events. The local community has raised funds to support recent immigrants in southern Israel who have been impacted by the violence.
- **The Bnei Akiva Jewish youth movement** has been very active in Italy, England, the Netherlands, and Argentina, raising awareness on social media, organizing Zoom events with Israelis who can share on-the-ground updates, and gathering community members virtually and in-person to pray for Israel and learn more about current events. In Rome, the movement gathered 1,000 community members for a demonstration in support in Israel that also drew local politicians.
- **Conexión Israel**, an organization founded by a Venezuelan olah to build connections between Latin American communities and Israel, has been very active on social media in support of Israel. Materials the organization produced have had over a million social media engagements. Two Zoom events—a live briefing with the IDF's Spanish-language spokesman and a conversation with a resident of southern Israel—drew a total of more than 2,500 people. The organization is currently producing a video on the experience of Latin American olim during the crisis.