

## **Update on The Jewish Agency actions in Ukraine – Feb 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

The Russian army launched an attack on Ukraine today. The fog of war is still thick, but it is known that a number of cities were attacked from the air and Russian ground forces infiltrated Ukrainian territory on several fronts. This is a dramatic and exceptional situation;

Last week, we evacuated Ministry of Education shlichim from Ukraine who operated there under our auspices. We also evacuated Jewish Agency shlichim to Lviv. This was conducted in coordination with diplomats from Israel's Embassy in Kyiv, who along with other official representatives, were prepared for a secure evacuation and continued activity in Lviv. Every effort is being made to ensure the security of our shlichim. All our activities are coordinated with Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nativ, and other Israeli government bodies. Additionally, another shaliach was sent to reinforce the team on the ground in Ukraine and five additional shlichim are on standby if needed, to the extent travel is possible. From the new office in Lviv, located in the west of the country, efforts are being made to direct Olim to exit by land, at border crossings with neighboring countries where consular representatives of the State of Israel are currently stationed. We will also examine the possibility of travel to Israel, to the extent possible, once air traffic is renewed.

The Jewish Agency's local employees continue to work from home, subject to safety guidelines and in accordance with developments on the ground. There are dozens of Aliyah counselors and staff members deployed in 14 cities throughout Ukraine. We are in constant contact with all Jewish Agency employees in efforts to continue ongoing activities, but also to identify and provide solutions to crisis situations that may arise. We advanced salary payments to our local employees so as to ensure their ability to stock up on food and other necessities. Emergency packages were also provided.

An emergency hotline was opened today in partnership with the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ). These are two emergency call centers that will operate in Ukraine and in Israel. In Ukraine, the hotline will help process applications for Aliyah and direct callers to the various assistance centers in the communities, and in Israel, the Global Aliyah Center is available to assist Israeli families of Ukrainian Jews. The hotlines will operate in Hebrew, Ukrainian and Russian, and additional staff will reinforce the call centers if there is an increase in calls, as we expect. We purchased satellite phones and distributed them to leaders in various communities to allow them to stay in touch with the outside world, even if phone and Internet lines are cut off.

With the understanding that massive civilian traffic is expected on the roads, and in the absence of air travel and expected expansion of the battle zones, we have opened two facilities that can immediately accommodate hundreds of people in each round. They are intended for Aliyah candidates who need housing for a transitional period. These facilities will have food, emergency equipment and all other necessities needed until they immigrate. We will be able to absorb these Olim in several rounds and, if necessary, we will expand the scope of the facilities to accommodate an increase in the number of Olim. Simultaneously, preparations are being made for the complex and sensitive aspects involved in taking the Olim out of the country in a safe and coordinated manner, in accordance with conditions on the ground and in coordination with all the required bodies. Later on, we will take care of their transfer to

Israel and the process of their absorption under emergency conditions. These Olim are expected to arrive with very little belongings and likely in a difficult emotional state that may require psychological support and follow-up. We are preparing to address the unique needs of this unusual situation.

The security of communities and community institutions is of course critical during this period. We are accelerating the implementation of a program for the protection of Jewish institutions throughout Ukraine through The Jewish Agency's Security Assistance Fund. In addition to this program, we are preparing to distribute security emergency grants to over hundred Jewish community organizations across the country to upgrade their protection and safety measures in the face of challenging realities (e.g: prevent looting during the war), as we did in the 2014 crisis. This critical aid will make it possible to keep these essential organizations in existence.

Additionally, we are aware of the plight and needs of over 1,500 young people from Ukraine who are currently participating in Jewish Agency programs in Israel and whose families back home are under fire. We are in constant contact and providing support to lone soldiers and participants on Masa, Naale and other Jewish Agency programs who are extremely concerned about their loved ones in Ukraine.

Likewise, just today, we concluded a seminar in Budapest with over a hundred students from Russia and Ukraine, together with participants from other Russian-speaking countries. These young people cannot return home given the state of war. We are extending their stay in Budapest and providing them a caring and supportive environment during this difficult time, as they worry about their families. We will take care of this group until they can return home.

A long list of immediate needs has arisen given this state of emergency and we are discussing them with our partners at Keren Hayesod, JFNA, foundations and other private donors. All our conduct in the field is coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nativ and the Israeli security establishment, as well as with other organizations operating in Ukraine such as the JDC, IFCJ and Christian organizations that assist us both routinely and in emergencies. Additionally, we operate in coordination with Israel's Ministry of Absorption and Integration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Diaspora Affairs. This joint activity is designed to optimize the assistance provided to Ukrainian communities, maximize resources and prevent duplication.

Last year, 3,100 Olim from Ukraine arrived in Israel. An additional 385 immigrants arrived from Ukraine since the start of 2022, of whom 100 came this week on a pre-planned flight and in cooperation with the IFCJ. The number of Jews in Ukraine, according to research by Professor Sergio della Pergola, is as follows: 43,000 people constitute the core population (two Jewish parents and self-identification as Jews). The extended Jewish population, which includes the core population as well as people with one Jewish parent or one grandparent and who have an affinity for Judaism, numbers about 140,000 people. If we add the members of a nuclear family who are not Jewish but are eligible for Aliyah under the Law of Return, we reach a total number of 200,000 people.