

Israel Update

The following was sent by Levana Caro, Director of Partnership for Sovev Kinneret, Milwaukee's Partnership2Gether (P2G) region in Israel:

I'm writing to you from the north, so worried for my whole family that lives down south. They went through a sleepless night and my nephews cannot stop crying. People in the north are ready to open their homes to families from the south, but the fact is that they cannot leave the house to get into the car because the rockets are relentless and they are afraid that the sirens will sound when they are in the car.

It's important to mention that the residents in the south are not complaining they have been waiting for a long time that something will happen to solve the terrible situation they have been living in.

I just wanted to share my feelings with you on such hard times.

May all of us know better and safer times.

As the violence continues in Southern Israel, we continue to work closely with key partners locally, nationally and in Israel. The above quote comes from Levana Caro, who lives in Israel's north and works closely with us through Partnership2Gether. We want to hear from you and your loved ones; as you hear from friends and family in Israel, please let us know.

Check your inbox for brief regular updates.

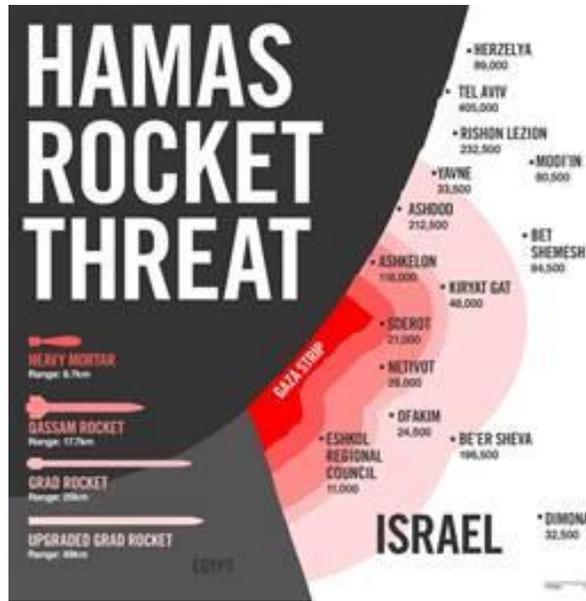
The American government has expressed support for Israel from the start of the operation:

The State Department [released a statement](#) on Wednesday, which included the following: "There is no justification for the violence that Hamas and other terrorist organizations are employing against the people of Israel. We call on those responsible to stop these cowardly acts immediately. We support Israel's right to defend itself, and we encourage Israel to continue to take every effort to avoid civilian casualties."

The Senate yesterday passed a resolution by unanimous consent expressing support for Israel's right to self-defense. Later today, the House is expected to adopt a parallel resolution -- H.Res. 813 -- "Expressing vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders, and recognizing and strongly supporting its right to act in self-defense to protect its citizens against acts of terrorism."

We are proud to be part of a community that responds with unity in crisis. The Jewish Federations of North America pledged \$5 million to deliver immediate services and assistance on the ground throughout southern Israel, including trauma counseling, portable bomb shelters and plans to remove people in the strike zones out of harm's way. Our overseas partners, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, are providing special services to those in danger, with particular attention to the most vulnerable -- the elderly and disabled, and the region's 23,500 grade-school students, 85 percent of whom suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

When this operation started, 1 million Israelis were in the firing range. With an expanded arsenal, Hamas' rocket fire now puts 4.5 million Israelis in the line of fire. The graphic below offers some perspective.



We express sympathy and concern for all those affected by this conflict and pray for a Shabbat of peace and a speedy resolution of this operation.

The following update comes from the Israel office of the Jewish Federations of North America:

In the last twenty four hours, over 250 rockets have been fired at the State of Israel, landing in the South and in the greater Tel Aviv area. The Israel Air Force has targeted over 450 terror activity sites in Gaza with the aim of impairing terrorists' rocket launching capability.

Homefront Security Minister, Avi Dichter warned Thursday evening "We're on our way to a night that won't be quiet" and that "This is no time for indifference." He expects hundreds of rockets to be fired from Gaza to Israel over the next days.

Rockets have been hitting Southern Israel since Saturday, with over 250 rockets on Thursday alone. The Iron Dome Defense system has intercepted 130 rockets headed towards populated areas and the IDF is readying to deploy a fifth battery. Intended for use starting 2013, the fifth, more advanced, battery of the Iron Dome is needed earlier.

Thursday night, a rocket hit near Bat Yam, landing in the sea. The sirens sounded in Tel Aviv, for the first time since the 1991 Gulf War, bringing home to Tel Aviv the immediacy of the violence inflicted on the periphery. Sirens were also heard in Rishon Letzion, Israel's fourth largest city, and in Holon, cities both very close to Tel Aviv.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak said in reference to the continued rocket fire that "From our experience there is no 'quick fix', and this test will continue, a test which we must face with resilience and composure. We are all family. And today in Tel Aviv, we are feeling something that over one million Israelis have been feeling for a long time, especially in these days."

The IDF suspended strikes over Gaza for three hours during Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Kandil's visit to Gaza today. Kandil was sent by President Morsi and condemned Israel's airstrikes on Gaza.

Rockets have scored direct hits on homes and vehicles today and the emotional trauma suffered by the besieged Israeli citizens is severe. 25 Israelis were rescued after the building they were in collapsed on top of them. Yesterday, Aharon Smadga, 49, Itzik Amsalem, 24, and Mira Sharf, 26 were buried after a rocket attack directly hit the apartment in Kiryat Malachi.

Mira Sharf was visiting Israel from New Delhi where she served as a Chabad emissary with her husband. She came with her husband and three children to mark the anniversary of the 2008 attack on the Mumbai Chabad House which killed nine, including Rabbi Gavriel and Rivka Holtzberg and was due to give birth in a few weeks. Her husband and 4-year-old son were seriously injured.

Hundreds of soldiers from the Paratroops, Golani and Givati Brigades and Armored Corps units, have been transferred to the Gaza border in preparation for a possible wide ground offensive. Right now 16,000 reservists have been called up in response to a "Tsav 9" call-up of reservists. Tsav 9 is a limited emergency call up, similar to a "Tsav 8" but smaller in number. 14,000 more reservists may be called up in addition. Families are adapting to the anxiety and pressures this demands.

Operation Pillar of Defense is working to reduce Hamas' ability to launch Fajar-5 rockets. Fajar-5 rockets are able to strike further across the country and target more people.

The IDF continues to distribute leaflets to Gazan citizens advising them to distance themselves from terrorists in the coming days. Watch the launch of rockets from Gaza into Israel.

President Peres addressed the targeting of Ahmed Jabari yesterday by the IDF and the strikes against Hamas' weapons and said, "The IDF operated with the utmost effort to avoid civilian casualties. Jabari was an arch-murderer and responsible for terror attacks and the killing of many. I salute the IDF and the security services for their accurate, surgical and strategically important operation."

Despite Operation Pillar of Defense and the onslaught of rockets pounding the millions of Israelis, Israel has not stopped providing electricity and water to Gaza as well as medical care for Palestinians who need it.

President Peres said, "There is no nation that loves peace and hates bloodshed like Israel, our enemies are not the people of Gaza, our enemies are not the Muslim people. Our enemies are the terrorists who operate without reason and without thought." The President stressed that Israel's hand is outstretched for peace but that Israel will do whatever is necessary to protect her citizens, "The world is beginning to understand that we are operating with responsibility and we do not take human life lightly. I don't know any country that would show restraint for as long as Israel did during the attacks on the south."

The Jewish Agency for Israel is preparing relief for a thousand new immigrant youth living in Jewish Agency absorption centers and 23,500 students between 1st and 12th grades throughout Beersheva, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Kiryat Gat, Ibim, and Arad, the center of the conflict, who will be in dire need of a break from the escalating security situation. The Jewish Agency for Israel is also preparing special group psychological interventions for parents and children for those suffering from emotional trauma.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is preparing emergency kits for elderly and the disabled in the afflicted regions, in addition to working with emergency case workers who provide the elderly and disabled with emotional and physical support so that they can stay in their homes during the sirens. The JDC is also delivering food to the elderly as day care centers are not able to run currently, running activities for children in shelters and settling in place post trauma interventions for children.

The Israel Trauma Coalition is running phone hot-lines, setting in place group workshops for children and parents, team training and support for those in the field and direct care for those in need in coordination with local councils.

Radio stations are announcing rocket attacks and on some stations the broadcasting is interrupted constantly by sirens and alerts. The Israel Broadcasting Authority will operate a radio frequency (531 AM)

during Shabbat house that will be silent except for emergency announcements. This arrangement is used only in times of severe national emergency.

Israeli social media has been put to good use in aiding citizens in finding alternative accommodations, offering their homes and even locations for weddings. Israel's center for coordinating public diplomacy efforts continues to fight against propagated falsehoods on Facebook, Twitter and other media avenues.

The Jewish Federations of North America have donated \$5 million to the Fund for the Victims of Terror in Israel to assist those Israeli citizens currently living under a constant threat of danger and also have set up an SMS system for donating via your cellphone. You can text ISRAEL to 51818.

JFNA and JCPA held a call Thursday with Lt. Col. Avital Leibovich, head of the International Media & Communications Branch of the IDF Spokespersons Unit who explained the situation and encouraged all abroad to fight Israel's media battle by combatting the falsehoods and misconceptions in the press.

More information on Operation Pillar of Defense is below. Click on links.

[IDF gears for ground operation in Gaza](#)

[IDF pummels Gaza, orders call-up, after rockets encroach on Tel Aviv](#)

[Palestinians in Jerusalem demonstrate in solidarity with Gaza as sirens wail in Tel Aviv](#)

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