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## Israel Update: November 19, 2012

Community Impact: Hal Karas, Milwaukee resident, received an email from his son, Steven Karas, a Tel Aviv resident.

*"We had heard at work that there were rockets in Rishon yesterday around 4:30 p.m. I had joked that if we heard the siren, we should go up to the roof of our office building and watch the show (our office is all drywall and glass). About 10 minutes after I got home, while I was talking to my flatmate about how close that is to Tel Aviv and how it could potentially change the situation on the ground, we heard the sirens, looked at each other and asked if this is really happening. We went into the safe room in our apartment until we heard a loud boom. We came out and turned on the radio. They said that there were 2 missiles aimed at Tel Aviv. One was apparently intercepted early on, and the other hit the beach/fell in the sea.*

*Several of my friends have already been called up for reserve duty, and with the expansion of the call up, there's a decent chance my flatmates will be too. Serving in a reserve unit on the northern border, there's not much I can do at the moment, but wait and hope."*

Our community has expressed appreciation to Wisconsin's Congressional delegation for their support of resolutions in the Senate and House of Representatives. On Thursday, the Senate passed [S. Res 599](#) by unanimous consent. Sen. Herb Kohl was one of the 65 co-sponsors. On Friday, the House passed [H. Res. 813](#), also by unanimous consent.

We express condolences and regret for those who have died and been injured during this crisis.

Four things to keep in mind about "Operation Pillar of Defense":

1. **The violence directed against Israel is rooted in ideology - not the living conditions in Gaza.** There is no Israeli "occupation" in Gaza. Israeli soldiers and civilians left Gaza completely in the 2005 disengagement initiative of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The territory has a border with the Egyptian Sinai, through which goods, including lethal rockets from Iran, can readily flow. There is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza, though conditions are unfortunately harsh because of the history of conflict and the fact that Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an organization widely regarded as a terrorist organization that is committed to Israel's destruction.
2. **The right of self-defense is fundamental and should be respected by all.** Though military operations will not bring about a long-term solution to the challenge of Gaza-based terrorism, the Israeli government has the right, actually the responsibility, to take measures to defend its citizens. The hundreds of rockets that landed in Israel prior to the launching of Operation Pillar of Defense fortunately did not claim any lives but they

induced great suffering for more than 1 million Israelis in the southern part of the country for a very long period of time. More than 12,000 rockets have rained down on southern Israel for the past 12 years.

3. **A permanent resolution of this situation can only be achieved through a negotiating process leading to two states for two peoples.** The Israeli government has offered to meet with Palestinian leadership without any preconditions to address all of the outstanding issues, including settlements, refugees, borders and security, and Jerusalem. PA President Mahmoud Abbas, thus far, has refused such negotiations, and, instead, has opted for a unilateral approach at the United Nations. He has, however, accepted the three conditions stipulated by the international community that make him an acceptable interlocutor for peace -- recognition of the right of Israel to exist; rejection of terrorism; and acceptance of previously signed agreements with Israel. Hamas, which possesses effective control over Gaza, does not accept any of these conditions. Thus, finding a long-term solution to Gaza will be challenging indeed.
4. **Israel takes great care to protect civilians.** Check out the [Israel Project's collection of videos](#) that show the IDF's efforts. Watch this [concise and powerful testimony from Col. Richard Kemp](#) at a special session of the UN Human Rights Council in 2009.

The central organizations serving vulnerable populations in Israel during this crisis are the American Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Israel. As we do every year, our Federation this year sent \$1.6 million as part of our annual Community Campaign. This crisis demonstrates why our federation, and our ability to unite in support of global Jewish community, is so important.

Are your loved ones in Israel? Do you have personal stories to share? Please send them to us via reply mail.

**Marlene Lauwasser**  
MJF Board Chair

**Hannah Rosenthal**  
MJF Chief Executive Officer/President

**Elana Kahn-Oren**  
Director of Community Relations and  
Israel & Overseas Engagement

1360 N Prospect Ave  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

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Milwaukee Jewish Federation | 1360 N Prospect Ave | Milwaukee | WI | 53202