

Jewish Agency for Israel in the Media



The New York Times

Skeptical of Deal, Israelis Step Tentatively From Bunkers

August 15, 2006

By GREG MYRE

KIRYAT SHMONA, Israel, Aug. 14 — With a cease-fire bringing calm to this rocket-riddled town, residents began emerging from bomb shelters on Monday. Traffic lights were turned on. A few cafes opened. And Freddy Misika was in his bright orange Lotto kiosk on the main street, promising winning tickets for all, just as he had done throughout the fighting.

Michael Kamber for The New York Times

Some Israelis returned to the sidewalks and cafes of Kiryat Shmona Monday, the first day of the cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah.

Unlike the Lebanese, who headed back to their homes in the south in large numbers, the displaced residents of northern Israel appeared more circumspect about the sturdiness of the cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah, and the returnees amounted to only a trickle.

But those who had weathered the Hezbollah rocket barrage in bomb shelters here were more visible on the streets, injecting at least a bit of life into places that had become virtual ghost towns.

On Kiryat Shmona's central thoroughfare, Route 90, soldiers and civilians shared tables at sidewalk cafes. At the town hall, the phone rang constantly as residents sought guidance on whether to return.

"People are confused; they don't know what they should do," said a town spokeswoman, Susan Peretz, a Jersey City native who moved here 25 years ago. "We told them: 'Please, wait a day or two if you can. There are a lot of services we can't supply.'"

Then there was Mr. Misika, 68, who never missed a day at his Lotto kiosk, aside from Saturdays, when almost everything shuts down for the Jewish Sabbath.

"I was here from 8 in the morning until the evening, even when the rockets were falling," Mr. Misika said. Business was down sharply, but he pulled out a pile of receipts from winning tickets, some for 10,000 shekels, which is more than \$2,000.

"That's just good luck," he said.

Hezbollah has fired some 4,000 rockets at northern Israel since fighting began on July 12, and its favorite target was Kiryat Shmona, where about 1,000 came crashing down. One dug out a chunk of pavement just 20 yards from Mr. Misika's



Skeptical of Deal, Israelis Step Tentatively From Bunkers

kiosk, shattering windows all around.

Fortunately, it fell on a Saturday, when he was not there. That, too, was luck, he said.

Asked if he believed in bad luck, Mr. Misika acknowledged that his wife and one of his sons were injured by a rocket 20 years ago, and that his home was damaged by another one six years back.

Still, he said, he did not have a bomb shelter at home, and neither he nor his wife gave any thought to leaving. "I'm working and bringing home money, so she's happy," Mr. Misika said.

An estimated 7,000 of Kiryat Shmona's 24,000 residents remained in the town, and most of those wanted to leave, but could not afford to do so, according to Mayor Haim Barbibai.

As the cease-fire took effect at 8 a.m., hundreds of residents gathered at points around Kiryat Shmona and other northern towns for a one-week vacation in cities farther south, where life had not been disrupted. The Jewish Agency for Israel, a quasi-governmental group that works on immigration issues, is paying for the trips.

"We live in a third-floor apartment and have been constantly running down to the shelter," said Anna Bitman, 59, who was heading to Jerusalem with her husband. "Whenever I'm cooking or we're eating, the sirens seem to go off."

Kiryat Shmona, the largest town in Israel's northeastern panhandle, has been the preferred target for Hezbollah rockets for more than two decades, and before that it was often hit from Lebanon by the exiled Palestine Liberation Organization.

The town and its residents are well practiced in responding to attacks, though the barrage over the past month is by far the heaviest in the nearly four decades since they began.

Some who stayed here said it was by choice, a personal statement of defiance directed at Hezbollah.

"I'm very disappointed that our army didn't continue fighting in Lebanon," said Shlomo Hayoun, 51, a municipal worker who said he ate most days at one of the town's few open cafes. "I hope the cease-fire doesn't hold because we have unfinished business with Hezbollah."

Copyright 2006 The New York Times Company

The New York Times

Israelis in North Are Pessimistic About a Truce

August 14, 2006

By GREG MYRE

KIRYAT SHMONA, Israel, Aug. 13 — Rockets whistling in from Lebanon have been a constant in Eli Ben-Abo's life for nearly four decades. As he waited out a barrage Sunday in a cramped, airless shelter, he was sure a truce set for Monday would not end that enduring threat.

"I've been listening to these rockets from 1970 until today," said Mr. Ben-Abo, 50, who was squeezed into the tiny cinder-block shelter with his wife and two daughters, along with four more relatives. "We keep hoping it will end, but it never does."

From the residents sweating it out in shelters to those in the bunker that serves as the mayor's office, the people here in Kiryat Shmona were deeply pessimistic that the United Nations truce, set to take effect Monday morning, would bring them quiet. Most believed it would take a week or more before the shooting stopped, and that any calm would be temporary.

In fact, more residents may be leaving Kiryat Shmona on Monday than are returning to it. The Jewish Agency, a quasi-governmental group that works on immigration issues, is offering to send up to 5,000 residents in northern towns out of rocket range for a week of rest and recuperation, said Yarden Vatikay, a spokesman for the group.

"There is no cease-fire — just listen for yourself," the town's mayor, Haim Barbibai, said a moment after a rocket landed a short distance away, wounding two people and shaking the fortified bunker where he currently works. "I'm sorry, but I'm not optimistic. I don't think the government has a clear plan on how to resolve this situation."

An estimated 17,000 of Kiryat Shmona's 24,000 residents have left the town, and some began calling the municipal offices on Sunday to ask if they should return.

"We told people to stay right where they were," the mayor said.

More than 220 rockets slammed into northern Israel on Sunday, killing one person, in one of the more intense bombardments of the conflict. Hezbollah has fired around 4,000 rockets in the past month, and about 1,000 have been fired at the Kiryat Shmona area in the northern panhandle.

Back in Mr. Ben-Abo's shelter, he recounted his personal history with rockets as another one crashed down outside.

His first taste was at age 13, back in 1970, when the Palestine Liberation



Israelis in North Are Pessimistic About a Truce

Organization, led by Yasir Arafat, began raining rockets on the town, Mr. Ben-Abo recalled.

In 1982, Mr. Ben-Abo was a soldier who fought in Lebanon for nearly a year in an operation that drove the P.L.O. out of Lebanon, but helped spawn Hezbollah.

In 1996, a Hezbollah rocket slammed into Mr. Ben-Abo's apartment, causing extensive damage, though he and his family were in a shelter and were unharmed.

While he has taken cover in the shelters countless times, the current round of fighting, which began July 12, has been the longest period he has had to spend in one.

The only break came from Tuesday to Saturday, when the government bused several hundred residents south for a few days of relaxation. Mr. Ben-Abo, his wife, Sarah, and two daughters, ages 22 and 21, went to Eilat, the Red Sea resort town at the southern tip of Israel.

"It was so nice to just get away," Ms. Ben-Abo said. "The government should have taken us away from here for the entire time."

When the Israeli military pulled out of Lebanon six years ago, the government said there would be calm, but Mrs. Ben-Abo was skeptical then, and is more so now.

"This will all happen again in another couple of years," she said. "In Kiryat Shmona, I don't think we'll ever have peace."

Copyright 2006 The New York Times Company.

The Boston Globe

Small comfort in beachfront tent city

August 9, 2006

By Charles A Radin, Globe Staff

Fears follow evacuees south

NITZANIM, Israel -- Huge tents in the blue and white colors of Israel line the fine white-sand beaches of Israel's southern Mediterranean coast, providing eating and sleeping areas for growing numbers of people fleeing the rocket barrages launched daily from Lebanon against their homes in the north.

Fighting intensifies near Israel-Lebanon border. A12 Sun and heat are intense here, but large canopies of gauzy material have been hoisted on poles to provide shade when the evacuees are outside the cramped tents. Under one, youth workers from the municipality of Jerusalem offer a belly dancing class, taught to Arabic music. Under another, teenagers play soccer. Yet another is crowded with children playing ping-pong, foosball and pool.

An estimated 250,000 Israelis have come south since the Islamist guerrillas of Hezbollah started their barrages July 12. Those with money have jammed the hotels of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Beersheva and Eilat. Thousands more have been taken in by relatives or families with extra space. But nearly a million are still living in underground shelters in the north, and some of them are complaining that the government is not moving energetically to make safe accommodations available.

More than 5,700 have been welcomed so far to the beach camp at Nitzanim , which private businessman Arkadi Gaydamak is personally financing at a cost of more than \$550,000 a day, according to his spokesman. Meals, laundry facilities and medical services all are provided free. The wealthy tycoon, who is paying teenage evacuees above the minimum wage to keep the camp clean, has sparked other businessmen and corporations to act. Contributions of goods and services are pouring in as the camp continues to grow.

In most southern cities, hotels have begun offering reduced rates, free meals and special children's programs for families from the north. Major television stations and newspapers routinely publish notices of families willing to host evacuees.

Evacuees at Nitzanim seemed dazed by the better-than-expected circumstances here. "I was frightened when the rockets were exploding in Nahariya, and bored when they were not," said Ma'ayan Ne'eman , 18, who left her home in the northern coastal city 10 days ago. "We have everything here. I even got my hair cut."

But they have no illusions that they are on holiday.



Small comfort in beachfront tent city

“We are despairing,” said Edna Malka , 33, who moved south with her husband and three young children after a Katyusha rocket narrowly missed their home in Acre. “This is not a life. We want to go home and we can’t.

“Everything is nice here, and thanks very much to those who gave,” Malka said, gesturing at the enormous tent, its floor covered wall-to-wall in mattresses, where her family is staying. “But bottom-line, we are refugees.”

That reality is reflected in the conduct and emotions of people seeking help in mental-health clinics and trauma centers in cities far from the embattled border.

“Even though they are in Jerusalem, many evacuees react as though they are still in danger,” said Joel Wardi , a clinical psychologist at the Israel Trauma Center in Tel Aviv. “They are very anxious, and are startled even by commonplace noises. There is a lot of depression, a feeling that the foundations of daily life have been shaken.”

The rockets and evacuation are a particular shock to the newest Israelis -- Ethiopian Jews who spent years camped around a refugee center in Addis Ababa waiting their turn to move to Israel.

Safed, a prime target of the Hezbollah rockets, is home to four absorption centers where immigrants from Ethiopia stay while learning to speak Hebrew and becoming accustomed to electric lights, cooking gas, banks and other modern facilities that they never had in their country of birth. When the rockets started to fall, they were bewildered.

Alamro Andargi , 40, waited six years in Addis with his wife, Sranish , 33, and their three children before moving to Safed in 2005.

“For a year it was quiet,” he said. “We knew about the 1967 war, and about the disputes between Palestinians and Israelis,” but not much about current events. Early in the latest fighting, he said, “we knew something was going on, but we didn’t know how bad it was until a rocket hit our building.”

When the sirens began wailing frequently, the parents felt it was unnatural to go into one bomb shelter while their children, who were in school, went into another. And even when families were reunited during breaks in the barrages, officials with the Jewish Agency for Israel, which assists new immigrants, felt many were in danger of being overwhelmed by the sudden experience with modern war.

The agency moved 25 of the most-stressed families from Safed to an absorption center in Mevaseret Zion, just west of Jerusalem, and began trying to raise the money needed to move many more.

The Andargis’ teenage children quickly developed a grasp of the unfolding events and began to supply them with details of the Hezbollah abduction of Israeli soldiers that escalated into war.

But the parents say they found true understanding in Scriptures.

“This is an ancient hate,” Alamro said, distributing popcorn in a handwoven basket in the bare Mevaseret apartment that the Andargis now share with another family. “This hate started in the wombs of the mothers.”

Sranish explained as she passed out cups of strong Ethiopian coffee that her

Small comfort in beachfront tent city

husband was referring to the discomfort felt during pregnancy by the Biblical matriarch Rebecca. God explained to Rebecca that there are "two nations in thy womb, two manner of people" -- Jacob, the forefather of the Jews, and his brother Esau, forefather of the Arabs.

"I knew there was this hatred," Alamro said, "but I didn't know it would be manifested like this."

The chief rabbi of South Africa, Warren Goldstein, was visiting Mevaseret on a solidarity mission. He said he was deeply moved by the efforts Israelis far from the war zone have made to ease the plight of evacuees in general and the Ethiopians in particular.

Goldstein said he had just come from a center for Arab children evacuated from the north. They also were being cared for largely through private volunteers and donations efforts. "This shows Israel is a tolerant, open society for all races," Goldstein said.

Latifa, an Arab evacuee from the hard-hit northern Israeli town of Ma'alot, who declined to give her family name, stood in the door of her tent in Nitzanim and said she was grateful that she, her husband, and three children had been given shelter in the beach camp, just as Jews from the region were.

"The rockets do not discriminate between Arabs and Jews," she said, while adding that she is furious "at the whole world that I am in this situation."

© Copyright 2006 Globe Newspaper Company.



In shift since Hezbollah war, Jewish Agency aids Israeli Arabs

September 6, 2006

By Dina Kraft

MAJDAL KRUM, Israel -- Light streams through the two-story community center in this northern Arab and Druse village that until recently stood freshly painted and newly built, but empty.

Funds from the Jewish Agency for Israel helped fill the rooms with chairs and tables and outfitted a computer lab. The donation is part of a shift in agency policy to begin assisting not only Israel's Jewish population but, to some degree, its Arab citizens as well.

"We will continue to be with you," JAFI chairman Zeev Bielski said on a recent visit to the neighboring village of Deir el-Asad. "We will bring more Jewish donations... There have been years of neglect of Israeli citizens who are no different from any other citizens."

Bielski was referring to the discrepancy in government funds and infrastructure provided for Israel's Arab minority as compared to the Jewish majority.

The shift in JAFI policy began on the first day of Israel's war this summer with Hezbollah. If Hezbollah's Katyusha rockets weren't discriminating between Arab and Jewish victims, Bielski announced, neither would the Jewish Agency make distinctions in dispersing assistance.

During the war, most of the agency's focus in the community was on bringing Arab, Druse and other non-Jewish children to the safety of camps in the center of Israel. The agency also helped fund a week of activities and field trips for children during the last week of summer vacation, part of an effort to give kids a feeling of normalcy after weeks living in bomb shelters or being shuttered inside their homes.

Since the war ended the agency has been investing in equipping community centers, several of which had lacked basic furniture and supplies. Officials say they also plan to help in longer-term projects such as coexistence gatherings for youth in mixed cities such as Haifa and Acre.

Historically, the Jewish Agency has focused its efforts only on Israel's Jewish population. It was founded in the 1920s, during the British Mandate, to represent the Jewish population in Palestine and its interests. At the time it focused on Jewish immigration, the purchase of land from local Arabs and setting the policies of the Zionist movement.

Since 1948, the agency has been charged with overseeing immigration to Israel, promoting Jewish and Zionist education worldwide and building ties with



In shift since Hezbollah war, Jewish Agency aids Israeli Arabs

Diaspora communities.

The subject of the Jewish Agency and its Zionist ethos is a sensitive topic for Israel's Arab citizens. Historically the agency was involved in determining where new Jewish towns and villages would be built, and many Arabs claim that such decisions came at their expense.

Most recently, with Israel having uprooted thousands of settlers from the Gaza Strip last year and aiming for a far larger withdrawal from the West Bank, JAFI has been involved in efforts to develop the Galilee and the Negev, both major Arab population centers. Some Arabs fear the planned additional Jewish development in their regions might infringe on their land rights.

Not everyone welcomes the agency's overtures. At the community center in Majdal Krum, a JAFI plaque was hung inside because of fears that it might be stolen or defaced if left outside.

At a gathering in the center's auditorium, Mayor Ahmed Dabah thanked JAFI for its support.

"This is what should be happening. All of Israel's citizens need to feel that we are treated the same way, and then the tensions will disappear," he said.

Not every one in the Jewish Agency is pleased with the idea that money raised by Diaspora Jews will go to Israel's non-Jewish communities.

"I think the Jewish Agency — in contrast to the Israeli government, which is obligated to all of its citizens — has a job to focus on the Jewish citizens of Israel," said Danny Dannon, chairman of World Likud and a member of the agency's board of governors. "If I were a Jew in Boca Raton, Fla., and gave \$100 to my local federation, I would want to know it was helping the Jewish enterprise in Israel."

In an interview with JTA, Bielski said the agency is determined to reduce the social gaps in Israeli society. Israel's Arab population, which makes up nearly 20 percent of the country, is among the worst-off socioeconomic groups.

Faris Sarhan, an unemployed 31-year-old cook who has been volunteering for months at the Majdal Krum center, said he welcomed JAFI's involvement.

"It was really difficult getting by without any equipment," he said.

Sarhan hopes that one day soon he'll be paid for the meals he provides to the center and the work he does with youth — but so far there are no salaries for center staff.

"Without donations, we have no funds coming in," said Kadah Malwa, 21, who also works at the center without a salary.

Sammy Bahar, JAFI's director for northern Israel, said he sees the agency's work in minority communities as something that's just beginning to take form.

"We need to deal with things with a lot of sensitivity. It's a different type of work here," he said while standing at the entrance to Deir el-Asad. "We're entering a long and interesting process that I hope will help change things."



In Shift Since Hezbollah War, Jewish Agency Aids Israeli Arabs

By Dina Kraft

MAJDAL KRUM, Israel, Sept. 6 (JTA) -- Light streams through the two-story community center in this northern Arab and Druse village that until recently stood freshly painted and newly built, but empty.

Funds from the Jewish Agency for Israel helped fill the rooms with chairs and tables and outfitted a computer lab. The donation is part of a shift in agency policy to begin assisting not only Israel's Jewish population but, to some degree, its Arab citizens as well.

"We will continue to be with you," JAFI chairman Zeev Bielski said on a recent visit to the neighboring village of Deir el-Asad. "We will bring more Jewish donations... There have been years of neglect of Israeli citizens who are no different from any other citizens."

Bielski was referring to the discrepancy in government funds and infrastructure provided for Israel's Arab minority as compared to the Jewish majority.

The shift in JAFI policy began on the first day of Israel's war this summer with Hezbollah. If Hezbollah's Katyusha rockets weren't discriminating between Arab and Jewish victims, Bielski announced, neither would the Jewish Agency make distinctions in dispersing assistance.

During the war, most of the agency's focus in the community was on bringing Arab, Druse and other non-Jewish children to the safety of camps in the center of Israel. The agency also helped fund a week of activities and field trips for children during the last week of summer vacation, part of an effort to give kids a feeling of normalcy after weeks living in bomb shelters or being shuttered inside their homes.

Since the war ended the agency has been investing in equipping community centers, several of which had lacked basic furniture and supplies. Officials say they also plan to help in longer-term projects such as coexistence gatherings for youth in mixed cities such as Haifa and Acre.

Historically, the Jewish Agency has focused its efforts only on Israel's Jewish population. It was founded in the 1920s, during the British Mandate, to represent the Jewish population in Palestine and its interests. At the time it focused on Jewish immigration, the purchase of land from local Arabs and setting the policies of the Zionist movement.

Since 1948, the agency has been charged with overseeing immigration to Israel, promoting Jewish and Zionist education worldwide and building ties with Diaspora communities.



In Shift Since Hezbollah War, Jewish Agency Aids Israeli Arabs

The subject of the Jewish Agency and its Zionist ethos is a sensitive topic for Israel's Arab citizens. Historically the agency was involved in determining where new Jewish towns and villages would be built, and many Arabs claim that such decisions came at their expense.

Most recently, with Israel having uprooted thousands of settlers from the Gaza Strip last year and aiming for a far larger withdrawal from the West Bank, JAFI has been involved in efforts to develop the Galilee and the Negev, both major Arab population centers. Some Arabs fear the planned additional Jewish development in their regions might infringe on their land rights.

Not everyone welcomes the agency's overtures. At the community center in Majdal Krum, a JAFI plaque was hung inside because of fears that it might be stolen or defaced if left outside.

At a gathering in the center's auditorium, Mayor Ahmed Dabah thanked JAFI for its support.

"This is what should be happening. All of Israel's citizens need to feel that we are treated the same way, and then the tensions will disappear," he said.

Not every one in the Jewish Agency is pleased with the idea that money raised by Diaspora Jews will go to Israel's non-Jewish communities.

"I think the Jewish Agency -- in contrast to the Israeli government, which is obligated to all of its citizens -- has a job to focus on the Jewish citizens of Israel," said Danny Dannon, chairman of World Likud and a member of the agency's board of governors. "If I were a Jew in Boca Raton, Fla., and gave \$100 to my local federation, I would want to know it was helping the Jewish enterprise in Israel."

In an interview with JTA, Bielski said the agency is determined to reduce the social gaps in Israeli society. Israel's Arab population, which makes up nearly 20 percent of the country, is among the worst-off socioeconomic groups.

Faris Sarhan, an unemployed 31-year-old cook who has been volunteering for months at the Majdal Krum center, said he welcomed JAFI's involvement.

"It was really difficult getting by without any equipment," he said.

Sarhan hopes that one day soon he'll be paid for the meals he provides to the center and the work he does with youth -- but so far there are no salaries for center staff.

"Without donations, we have no funds coming in," said Kadah Malwa, 21, who also works at the center without a salary.

Sammy Bahar, JAFI's director for northern Israel, said he sees the agency's work in minority communities as something that's just beginning to take form.

"We need to deal with things with a lot of sensitivity. It's a different type of work here," he said while standing at the entrance to Deir el-Asad. "We're entering a long and interesting process that I hope will help change things."



European Jews help northern Israelis

August 17, 2006

The chairman of the European Jewish Congress gave \$3 million to the Jewish Agency for Israel to help with summer camps for children from northern Israel.

The funds presented this week by Pierre Besnainou, main backer of the French group AMI, which works closely on aliyah with the Jewish Agency, were collected from French Jews.

© JTA. Reproduction of material without written permission is strictly prohibited.





Israeli kids safe at summer camp, but worry about parents back home

August 3, 2006

By: Brett Kline

PETACH TIKVA, Aug. 3 (JTA) — Wide-eyed Daniel's eyes grow even wider when he talks about hearing the Katyushas hit near his house in Haifa.

"It's nice to come to this camp and be out of the city," the 10-year-old says.

"One of the bombs hit my uncle's house in Haifa. I'm sure there will be more bombs," he adds philosophically.

Says Fayed, age 9, from Sha'ab, an Arab village near Carmiel: "I came here because I didn't want to hear the bombs."

Daniel and Fayed are among nearly 20,000 children from northern Israel evacuated since Hezbollah began bombing Israel on July 12.

The camp they attend, which takes up to 600 children for five-day stays, is in the Baptisti Village Hayarkon Park complex near the town of Petach Tikva. The camp is run by the Hanoar Haoved V'halomed, the largest youth movement in Israel.

Funded by the Jewish Agency for Israel, the camp is one of the largest of 20 camps and four youth villages in an agency program called "Embracing the Confrontation Line Children."

The coordinators, all in their 20s, realize that the crisis has created an opportunity.

"The kids come from different worlds in the north, except for the Haifa kids who live in somewhat mixed neighborhoods," explained the camp's educational director, Liza Atias. "While we try to give them the same values about equality and opportunity, it has always been easier for cultural and logistical reasons to run the camps separately. This is the first time in our movement that Jewish, Arab and Druse kids are together, and it is a success."

The Jewish Agency's chairman, Zeev Bielski, came up with the idea of opening the camps on the night of July 13 and immediately found \$1 million in funding from the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization of Jewish federations in North America.

Since then, Bielski has raised close to \$3 million from the UJC and Keren Hayesod, which raises money for Jews around the world.



Israeli kids safe at summer camp, but worry about parents back home

More money has come from Israeli companies and private sources, as well as from private international donors.

Bielski himself insisted on putting the Jewish, Arab and Druse kids together in the two youth movement camps.

"I wanted to get the kids out of the North," he said, "and the war has shown us that it doesn't matter if you are Jewish or Arab. If you are Israeli, you are under attack. This is the first time, as far as I know, that JAFI funding has gone toward the Arab sector like this."

The youth movement acted quickly after getting the call from JAFI.

"In one night we found this complex, contacted the parents, put the kids on the buses and got them the hell out of the north," technical coordinator Efrat Shaked says. "Their camp counselors from each community, 16-18 year-olds, came with them. For many of the 9- and 10-year-olds, this is the first time they have left home, so their counselors are a real security net."

Everything in the camp is outdoors under drooping eucalyptus trees. Jewish kids sleep on one side in sleeping bags without tents, boys and girls more or less separated.

The Druse and Arab kids sleep in their own separate areas, in tents.

"The boys and girls cannot just sleep separately; they must have some kind of physical barrier between them, such as a tent," Shaked says. "This is their culture, and we respect that."

One recent day, Druse and Arab kids are busy putting up tents with the help of their counselors as some of the Jewish kids look on.

The day has been spent at a nearby Luna water park, and athletic competitions await after dinner.

"Contrary to what you might think, not one Jewish kid has asked, 'how come they get tents and we don't?'" Efrat says. "When they arrive here to spend five days away from the North, they are mostly excited and worried."

Often when kids go to summer camp, their parents worry about them.

"Here, it is the opposite," she says. "The kids are worried about their parents, who in many cases are still home in the north. Not everyone can afford hotel rooms in Tel Aviv and Eilat, and some people cannot leave their jobs for various reasons."

Luba and Omer are among a group of kids sitting in a circle, singing with their counselors.

"I saw the bombs make the houses shake," says Luba, 11, from Haifa. "We went to the shelters. My parents are still at work. I'm glad to be here, but I'm worried about them."

Omer, also 11, knows about politics.

"We don't want to kill the Lebanese people, especially the children," he says. "We just want to destroy the Hezbollah. And I think it is great that the kids from the Arab villages in the north are here with us. I have never talked with them before."

Israeli kids safe at summer camp, but worry about parents back home

So maybe we can get to know them now.”

“In the village, people say it is ‘maktub,’ your destiny, if you get hit by a bomb,” says Muzia, an 18-year-old counselor from Sha’ab.

She explains that there are no shelters in Arab villages, where men and women who aren’t from the same family can’t sleep together in the same room.

“Personally, I would rather be here in this camp,” Muzia continues, “and I am grateful that the movement got us out of the North for a while.”

At headquarters, a large tent under the trees, coordinators are sitting in front of computers. Shai Nir is handling phone calls from parents.

He says that about 40 parents have called from bomb shelters to make sure their kids are all right.

“We reassure them,” he says. “The kids are fine.”

He looks toward the armed guards at the entrance to the camp.

“The North is not far away, but here, the kids are safe,” he says. “The rest is not in our hands.”

© JTA. Reproduction of material without written permission is strictly prohibited.



As needs mount, Israeli charities swing into action throughout North

August 2, 2006

By: Dina Kraft

NAHARIYA, Israel, Aug. 2 (JTA) — Stale, hot air fills the flight of concrete stairs that barrels deep into the earth and leads to the surprising cool of a bomb shelter in a corner of Nahariya's poorest neighborhood.

A gleaming new air conditioner blows cool air for the shelter's residents, who on Tuesday were spending their 21st day underground.

The air-conditioning unit is one of 220 secured in the first days of the war by Natan Golan and Hanan Chen, founders of Galila, The Northern Galilee Development Foundation.

Residents of the northern town of Kfar Vradim, the pair founded the grass-roots philanthropic organization six months ago.

Since the fighting began, they have been on the ground every day, assessing people's most basic needs — from flak jackets and helmets for rescue workers and municipal workers to air conditioners for bomb shelters.

"We were choking here; the air was hot and sticky," Maya Edri, 23, said of life in the shelter before Galila installed the air conditioner.

One of 25 people living in the shelter, Edri is eight months pregnant.

"We were irritated and it was hard to be here. Now we're still frightened, but at least we have a much more comfortable atmosphere to be in," she said.

Galila is one of several organizations working overtime to help residents of the North who have been living under a barrage of rocket fire unprecedented in Israeli history for its duration and intensity. Hezbollah has fired thousands of rockets into northern Israel since the confrontation began July 12.

Most recently, Galila has turned its attention to getting northern residents to Jerusalem for brief holidays at hotels where they can go on guided tours, enjoy free meals and take a break from the stress of life under attack.

Oshri Shloosh, deputy mayor of Nahariya, sent a busload of residents to Jerusalem on Tuesday morning in a trip organized by Galila and a Jerusalem travel agency, Da'at.

"Everyone talks. They act," Shloosh said of Galila.



As needs mount, Israeli charities swing into action throughout North

Some 300,000 residents have fled the North, finding shelter among friends and family or at hotels in central or southern Israel.

Many of the Jewish Israelis who remain in the North are those from some of the weaker segments of society — recent immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union, the elderly and the handicapped.

Israeli Arabs, who make up much of the population of the Galilee, have mostly stayed at home.

Most of the local campaigning by Israeli charities has been for food assistance provided by organizations like Latet, Meir Panim and Chabad, and calls for donations of refrigerators and air conditioners.

Abroad, a host of emergency fund-raising campaigns have been launched. Major philanthropic players like the United Jewish Communities and the United Israel Appeal of Canada federation systems are central addresses whose fund-raising helps support the work of organizations such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Others, like the Jewish Funders Network, are working to help funnel donations to JAFI, the JDC and other private foundations that are addressing local needs.

Working with their foundation members, the group is educating donors about where the funds are most needed. There is a tremendous desire to help “to alleviate short-term and long-term problems created or exacerbated by the crisis,” said Mark Charendoff, the president of the New York-based foundation, which has already sent more than \$800,000 in donor-designated funds to the region.

The JDC focuses in part on assisting the elderly through its Eshel program, which has been helping partner organizations in the North provide some 5,000 meals a day and working to evacuate northerners to hotels in the center of the country.

For those elderly too frail to leave the bomb shelters, the JDC also has put together kits with basic supplies like toothbrushes and flashlights.

The organization also is helping to bring some 16,000 children to central Israel to attend day camps. For children in the shelters, it’s providing packages with toys, computer games and arts and crafts supplies, as well as providing support for trauma counseling through an umbrella organization called the Israel Trauma Coalition.

“Because we are familiar with the needs, we were able to mobilize,” said Becky Caspi, a member of JDC’s emergency response team.

Charlotte Friedman, director of Shiloh, which helps the elderly in Haifa, said her organization’s efforts to provide clients with hot meals, medications and trips to the doctor depend on support from the JDC during crises like this. About a quarter of Shiloh’s clients are Holocaust survivors.

The JDC is “transferring money into our account, and that’s what’s needed now,” she said. “They’re not just talking; they’re helping.”

Officials at JAFI, meanwhile, are spearheading efforts to help children from the North by bringing 20,000 so far to overnight camps in the center of the country. The price tag is about \$4 million; \$3 million came from the UJC and another \$1 million from an Israeli philanthropist, according to Michael Jankelowitz, a JAFI spokesman.

As needs mount, Israeli charities swing into action throughout North

Arab and Druse children also have been brought from the North to two of JAFI's camps.

JAFI also is assisting in the purchase of air conditioners for public bomb shelters and is helping recent Ethiopian immigrants at absorption centers in the North cope with the crisis through psychological counseling in their native language of Amharic.

Trauma counseling is another urgent need. Ruth Bar-On, founder of Selah, the Israel Crisis Management Center, focuses on those who have lost loved ones and need psychological counseling and those with no money for rent, food or extra medicine.

Selah is seeking extra funds to hire a Russian-speaking social worker and a volunteer coordinator for the North.

"The first thing we have to feel is that we are safe in our homes, and this crisis shows us we are not safe," Bar-On said.

Natal, another organization that provides trauma counseling, tries to reach those directly affected by terrorism and war. The group has been sending counselors to shelters and also to train community leaders dealing with residents in distress.

The organization typically receives 4,000 calls a year for assistance; now it's getting about 4,000 calls a week.

To help ease the psychological stress, Jerusalem's Hadassah-University Hospital is sending teams of pediatric psychiatrists, pediatricians, social workers and even clowns to meet with children and their parents at shelters.

Joseph Hyman, president of the Center for Entrepreneurial Jewish Philanthropy, a nonprofit organization based in New York that advises potential philanthropists in exploring meaningful Jewish giving opportunities, has been working to identify some of the most critical needs in the North.

Major priorities he has identified include providing meals and trauma counseling and boosting overworked and understaffed firefighting teams.

"I don't think if you look back on previous wars you would find the same kind of issues," he said.

This is a time where generosity is especially key, Hyman said.

"I think the system of American Jewry is adjusting quickly, and I think they are beginning to respond in a serious way," he said.

Sitting in the operations center in the underground shelter of the Ma'alot-Tarshiha municipality building is Silas Libilya, deputy mayor of the joint Arab-Jewish municipality.

He lists off the support received from Jewish organizations and from communities across the world, including sister cities of Montreal, and Marseilles and Perpignan in France.

"We feel their desire to help. Every day you feel good knowing there are Jews in the world," he said.

Arabs Charge Bias In The Rebuilding Effort

Four Arab villages in north petition Supreme Court, citing discrimination in distribution of recovery funds.

**Joshua Mitnick - Israel Correspondent
Fasutta, Israel**

When Hezbollah Katyusha rockets were raining down on Arab towns in northern Israel last summer, Israeli politicians were quick to point out that the missiles didn't distinguish between Jews or Arabs.

But as Israel and diaspora Jewish communities ramp up distribution of \$1 billion in planned recovery assistance over the coming years, the Arab activists in northern Israel are charging government discrimination in the recovery effort.

A Supreme Court petition from businessmen in this Arab village and three others near the Lebanon border accuses Israel's Finance Ministry of unfairly excluding them from a generous compensation package offered to more than 100 Israeli communities in the same region.

"We pay the same taxes as our Jewish neighbors, so why should we get partial compensation while they're getting full," said Samuel Dakwar, the Fasutta attorney whose petition to the court has been joined by at least one Arab civil rights group. "We have a big belief that the Supreme Court won't let this situation continue."

The Oct. 30 hearing will be the first major bias case to emerge from the war's aftermath, but there is concern that it is only a symptom of a larger imbalance in the aid effort. Arabs believe fueling the discrimination are politicians seeking to punish the country's one-fifth minority for their criticism of the war.

To be sure, politicians like Finance Minister Avraham Hirschson have pledged to distribute recovery aid equally between Jewish and the Arab communities. But civil rights activists warn that it may be too late to dismantle decades of institutionalized bias in minority funding.

"In general there is reason to worry about it because of the record of the State of Israel for unequal division of resources between Jewish and Arab citizens," said Shalom Dichter, co-director of Sikkuy, a Jewish-Arab group that monitors government civil rights reform. "Patterns of discrimination in government actions are deeply rooted in the government services."

At stake for Israel in the Galilee recovery program is an opportunity to improve ties between the government and Arab communities or aggravate tensions still sore from the Palestinian uprising. For North American Jewish federations who



Arabs Charge Bias In The Rebuilding Effort

hope to underwrite about one third of the aid program, it figures as the first major test of a recent policy shift to actively aid Israel's Arab citizens.

Jewish Agency officials are touting aid projects in Arab communities during the war as evidence of the new commitment of North American donors to cultivate programs with the country's Arab citizens. During the war, the agency helped evacuate Arab families from hot spots, built community centers in Arab municipalities and distributed scholarships.

But local officials said they were unable to say precisely how much donor money is reaching Israeli Arabs.

In the case of the Arab border villages' petition to the high court, attorney Dakwar believes that a high court victory could deter government ministries from discriminating against Arabs in the aid effort.

The petition demands the government extend villages like Fasutta the status of "border communities" — known as "sfar" in Hebrew — which would make businesses there eligible for full compensation on lost profit and overhead expenses during the war.

The designation, which originated in the early 1960s, has been given to towns within a few miles of Lebanon to offset the damage of Israel's intermittent border flare-ups over the past decades. Except that among more than 100 communities that enjoy the status, four Arab villages within the same distance of the border don't appear on the list.

Those include Aramshe, which literally hugs the border, Jish, Milya, and Fasutta, where residents can recount damages from Lebanese guerrilla attacks stretching back to the killing of two residents by Palestinian terrorists en route to taking 90 students hostage in Ma'alot. During the summer's war in Lebanon, villagers said they were unable to sleep at night from the constant sound of artillery firing.

Rayek Matar, a building engineer and contractor from Fasutta, estimated businesses in Jewish cities just a few miles away are getting 60 percent more in war compensation — even though the Arab village was used by the army as a firing ground for the Israeli artillery cannons used to shell targets in southern Lebanon.

"We're saying why should there be a difference between here and there?" he said. "We were right in the middle of the whole thing. We were exposed to the same danger. The army was sitting in the middle of the village."

An official in the Finance Ministry, who asked to remain anonymous because of the sensitivity of the issue, acknowledged that the border community designation was based on an outdated list. But if the ministry updated the list with four Arab villages, it would expose itself to claims from municipalities as far south as Haifa and bust the treasury's budget.

"They can't get the same compensation because it's impossible," said the official. "If I were to add them, what justification would I have not to add Safed and Haifa."

Other signs of bias have emerged in the first weeks after the war.

After turning away loan applications by Arab entrepreneurs, a small business development arm of Israel's Industry and Trade Ministry was forced by a

Arabs Charge Bias In The Rebuilding Effort

government's legal counsel to retract the policy and return the money of a Jewish donor who had requested it go only to Jews and military veterans.

And one civil rights activist from Haifa charged that recovery aid from the city's partnership with the Boston Jewish federation had barely reached Haifa's Arab residents.

"Our feeling is that aid will be offered by Jewish organizations so that government ministries" could outsource the financial burden, said Jafar Farah, director of the Haifa-based civil rights advocacy group Mossawa, "because that would have required them to act equally."

Farah said he doesn't expect Arabs in Israel to be the top priority of American Jewish groups and the Jewish Agency. Agency officials and donors counter that money is reaching Israeli-Arab communities in the form of new community centers, bomb shelters, small business loans, and scholarships. And yet, those interviewed couldn't say for certain exactly what proportion of the assistance is received by Israeli Arabs.

A local spokesman for the Boston-Haifa partnership said the federation has doled out \$2.5 million, but couldn't say precisely who benefited, though he added that "there were many Arabs" who got assistance.

"We have no breakdown on how many Arabs got business loans. We don't know how many children were taken out" of the north for camp and other retreats while the fighting was raging. "They are big numbers," said Yossi Gluzman, a local official with the Boston-Haifa partnership. "No one can give exact numbers, and to do so would be pulling it out of my sleeve."

Jeff Kaye, director of resource development and public affairs at the Jewish Agency, said aid would be spent "absolutely proportionally." However, his ballpark estimate that Israeli Arabs got 25 percent of \$70 million in already-dispersed aid, suggested otherwise in a region where Arabs make up about half the population.

Civil rights activists said that if aid agencies wanted to release figures on the distribution of aid to Arab communities, there are methods to track the money. And even though the Jewish Agency's 25 percent estimate represents progress compared to the past, activists said there's still a long road to travel.

"I know what the Agency and the United Jewish Communities are trying to do," said Mohammed Darawshe, the Israel director of development for the Abraham Fund Initiatives, which funds coexistence projects in Israel. "The trend is laudable. It's about time, but we still haven't reached its realization. The road is still long. Even though they want egalitarian policy, there are a lot of gaps to close." n



Birthright-Type Trips Planned For Teens In North

August 11, 2006

Stewart Ain

In an effort to help war-weary young adults in northern Israel escape the constant rocket attacks by Hezbollah and learn something about their country, Taglit-birthright israel will begin providing free weeklong trips similar to the educational programs offered to diaspora Jewry.

A total of 10,000 young people 18 to 26 from the north will be taken on trips to see the rest of the country in what is being termed "an educational and cultural respite." The trips, which will cost about \$4.5 million and come at the urging of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, will be paid for by private philanthropists, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the government of Israel.

Meanwhile, UJA-Federation of New York has raised \$25 million for its Israel Emergency Campaign to help widows and orphans of fallen soldiers and to provide trauma support for children, Holocaust survivors and others traumatized by the war in Lebanon.

That money, along with a \$10 million grant from its reserve fund, will be part of the \$60 million UJA-Federation is raising for the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization for 155 Jewish federations in North America. A spokesman for the UJC said that because of ever increasing needs the organization now hoped to raise more money than its original goal of \$300 million. He said that to date \$115 million has been pledged.

The Jewish National Fund said it had received in excess of \$3.5 million in donations. The money is being used to buy fire retardant to extinguish tree fires ignited by Hezbollah rockets. In addition, it is being used to provide a summer camp for more than 2,000 children who have fled the north, to buy 70 fire trucks, each of which costs \$100,000, and to provide food and games for children in bomb shelters in the north.

2000 - 2006 The Jewish Week, Inc. All rights reserved.





New York Jewish community sending \$9.3 million to battered Israeli town

October 3, 2006

The Associated Press

JERUSALEM --The Jewish community of New York city has announced a \$9.3 million (€7.3 million) donation to the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shemona, battered by rockets during this summer's war between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah, according to a statement released Tuesday.

The donation from the United Jewish Appeal-Federation of New York will go to programs for children and elderly residents of Kiryat Shemona, next to Israel's border with Lebanon, the UJA said in the statement. The money will also fund a trauma center and pay to bring volunteers from abroad to help renovate bomb shelters, the statement said.

Hezbollah fired nearly 4,000 rockets at Israel's north during the monthlong conflict, displacing around 300,000 people and forcing hundreds of thousands more into bomb shelters. The war left 120 Israeli soldiers and 39 civilians dead. In Lebanon, more than 850 people were killed, most of them civilians, according to official figures.

Kiryat Shemona, a town of about 22,000 just across the border from Lebanon, was a main target of rockets and suffered considerable damage.

The contribution is part of \$300 million (€236 million) pledged by American Jews to help Israel recover from the war, according to Michael Jankelowitz, a spokesman for the Jewish Agency, a non-governmental Israeli organization that deals with the Diaspora.

"This war has been a major catalyst in getting Jews to stand behind Israel," Jankelowitz said.

During the war, donations from Jewish communities abroad paid for the installation of air conditioners and televisions in bomb shelters in northern Israel and for vacations for Israelis in the line of fire. Since the war ended with a U.N. cease-fire on August 14, donations have funded scholarships for university students called up for army reserve duty and grants helping small businesses recoup their losses.

Copyright © 2006 The International Herald Tribune

HAARETZ.com

Jewish Agency launches campaign to rehabilitate North

August 17, 2006

By Amiram Barkat

The Jewish Agency has announced it will begin a campaign to rehabilitate the North by assisting small businesses, educational institutions and tourism, students and the injured.

The Jewish Agency has received \$60 million from Diaspora Jews, earmarked for various purposes - among them hosting some 30,000 children in the center of the country, and installing thousands of air conditioners, TV sets, lighting and other emergency equipment in public and private shelters in Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

The Jewish Agency and JDC-Israel were the main recipients of funds raised by the United Jewish Communities (UJC) in North America, which has so far collected approximately \$180 million for various projects benefiting northern residents.

Vice Premier Shimon Peres left yesterday on a lecture tour in the United States to assist in the fund-raising efforts, replacing former prime minister Ehud Barak, who cancelled his participation at the last minute.

French Jews also rally round

Meanwhile, the Jewish communities of Europe are also organizing campaigns for the residents of northern Israel. For example, business people and organizations in Great Britain have paid for the purchase of tens of thousands of back-to-school kits for northern students.

The campaign was spearheaded by Sigalia Hefetz, the wife of Israel's ambassador to the U.K., Zvi Hefetz.

The French Foreign Ministry yesterday opened a hotline to raise money from French citizens. The money would be channeled to meet the humanitarian needs of northern residents, Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said.

© Copyright 2006 Haaretz. All rights reserved





How corporate Israel saved lives and fed an army

August 21, 2006

By Eynav Ben Yehuda

In the midst of the war in Lebanon, as Bank Hapoalim staffers and executives toured the North, a few soldiers approached deputy chair Danny Dankner. The soldiers told Dankner their concerns about their imminent entry into enemy territory without appropriate equipment. The soldiers talked about a shortage of flak jackets. Dankner, together with chairman Shlomo Nehama and CEO Zvi Ziv, approved a purchase of the missing equipment. Instructions were sent immediately to the bank's director of logistics Iki Tsur, and the next day the unit that had spoken to Dankner got 400 flak jackets valued at about NIS 400,000.

These were not the only troops who held out their hand to get equipment the Israel Defense Forces failed to provide to those it sent to battle: reservists and enlisted men asked for and received from corporations army shoes, towels and even toothbrushes. Some of the things, especially the toiletries, are not usually provided by the army but soldiers can buy them at mobile PXs that didn't show up this time, at least at some units.

The most sought after goods in the early days of the warfare were basic foodstuffs. Military brass, eating every day in the comfy mess halls of the Tel Aviv military headquarters or in the nearby downtown restaurants, forgot their central job was to prepare for war and make sure that in an emergency it would be possible to send the troops into battle. If dozens of corporations hadn't volunteered to provide food to thousands of soldiers, entire battalions of the strongest army in the Middle East would have collapsed long before they faced the real enemy.

Most of the corporations didn't exploit the donations for advertising or public relations, but after all they are commercial entities and businesspeople's basic instinct tells them - if you're going to spend a small fortune, there is no reason not to turn it a little in your favor. And so IDF soldiers and officers found themselves modeling for PR shots pushing consumer goods.

Less grave but no less embarrassing was the failure in civil preparation for the war. No one was surprised by the barrage of Katyusha rockets that fell on Galilee communities. After all, one of the central aims of the counterattack against the terrorists had been to prove that Israel will not be deterred by the threat of rockets on civilians.

But Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's henchmen didn't understand the ramifications of the shelling: the deserted towns, the collapse of public services, closed businesses and the difficulties facing those that remained under the rain of rockets. While Olmert and the rest of the cabinet ignored Northerners' distress and sang the praises of the "strong home front," dozens of nonprofit



How corporate Israel saved lives and fed an army

organizations and corporations stepped up to the plate to cover for the failures of the government, sending thousands of tons of foodstuffs, clothing, air conditioners and television sets to those sitting in bomb shelters.

Meanwhile, voluntary organizations set up to evacuate Northerners to hotels and permanent and temporary facilities in central Israel. Billionaire Arcadi Gaydamak - usually busy being questioned about various deals that may or may not involve moneylaunders of varying scope - went one step further and government failures made him into a national hero. Gaydamak understood before anyone else what the results of the war could be. Within days he had identified a location on Nitzanim Beach to set up a huge, well-equipped tent city, for residents of the North.

The tent city employed hundreds of workers, and the cost of maintaining it for the duration of the war is estimated at \$15 million. Last Tuesday, the site closed down and the last bus took the final remaining tent dwellers back to the North. Gaydamak, who became much-beloved to many who found shelter in his tent city, did not make do with just hosting the displaced Northerners. He also donated NIS 10 million to ambulance service Magen David Adom and \$150,000 to Rabbi Grossman's summer camp for kids.

Even before the war Gaydamak made tens of millions of dollars in charitable donations, taking care that his generosity got the press it deserved. But nothing got the positive buzz the tent city did. If Gaydamak ever does face trial and is convicted of any of the serious crimes of which he is suspected, his judges will have to consider his good deed when sentencing him.

If fund-raising in the past focused on garnering treats for soldiers who completed training exercises, soldiers in this war had to raise donations for lifesaving equipment. For instance, the reservists in one elite unit - discharged from reserve duty a few days ago - report they raised money from various companies to buy equipment necessary for warfare, such as shoes, knee-pads and dust goggles.

The pain and frustration created by the war raised a great deal of criticism about how the war was run. But the criticism didn't only come from civilians, Monday morning strategic experts, who thought the battles could have been run differently; the longer the war went on, the stronger the voices in the field grew, about the poor handling of residents of the North, about sending troops into battle with outdated and non-existent equipment, and without enough food and water.

Private entities waltzed through this open door. As soon as the war broke out, businesses, nonprofits and individuals hastened to provide for both the Northerners and the soldiers, fulfilling needs at least some of which should have been supplied by local government and the IDF.

As hostilities dragged on and the list of donors got longer, it began to appear as if those in need also understood that the address for problem resolution wasn't the state. Local governments asked corporations and private donors for help equipping shelters and sending food packages. Soldiers with 1960s-era equipment preferred appealing directly to corporations for help in buying the right gear.

It is difficult to quantify the scope of the contributions that changed hands in the past month, or those likely to help recovery. They are estimated at hundreds of millions of shekels.

How corporate Israel saved lives and fed an army

The biggest fund-raiser is the Jewish Agency, which collected \$80 million since the beginning of the war, mostly in the U.S. and Canada. The agency's director of financial resource development, Jeff Kaye, said veteran Israeli businessmen who prefer not to be named, donated to the Jewish Agency for the first time.

Kaye recalls, "On the day the two soldiers were kidnapped, local government leaders already approached us. They believed the situation was about to heat up and asked for help in getting children out to central and southern Israel. That day we started checking out with the U.S. activists what could be done."

Kaye tells how the Jewish Agency immediately set up to evacuate tens of thousands of children from the North. "The response from donors was amazing," he says. "We raised millions of dollars in days. It is important to remember that in usual times when we send out our various requests the answer is 'We'll check and get back to you.' This was completely different. Donors said 'You do what needs doing and we'll take care of the funding.' That is a huge vote of confidence."

Jewish Agency CFO Yaron Neudorfer says the organization used the donations to renovate and equip shelters in northern Israel, run summer camps for kids and many other activities designed to help residents. According to him, "It's important the aid went to all Northerners - Jewish, Circasians, Arabs and Bedouin."

Ran Melamed, deputy director of grassroots organization Yedid, offers many examples of organizations that contributed to the benefit of civilians in the North. "We were asked a lot how to help," he says, sharply criticizing the government. "The state didn't handle residents of the North right at all, because it didn't want to. It's very simple. Treasury officials didn't want to do anything. The little they did was late and only after massive pressure."

Melamed adds that in some local governments in the North, anarchy reigned supreme. Hints of donations that went astray began to surface as much as two weeks ago but are getting louder. Melamed has heard the stories. "There are a few jurisdictions where what went on was just plain anarchy. It is not clear how the money was distributed. Equipment that was donated just disappeared. Whether it was food, televisions or shopping vouchers. There are mayors who became sheriffs." Despite the harsh criticism, Melamed says Yedid is now focused on the recovery effort. "And we see the state goof-ups that will happen on this front too."

It appears that other organizations share the sense that the state cannot be relied on to repair the damage. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee announced plans to help the underprivileged in northern communities. The Jewish Agency and Friends of the Israel Defense Forces plan to help businessowners who suffered serious financial damages.

According to Neudorfer, the Jewish Agency just launched a campaign to raise more than \$300 million to help northern Israel recuperate from the war. "Our aim is to help businessowners who were seriously harmed by the warfare, students and educational institutions in the North, and rebuild public facilities that were damaged by rocket fire," he says. FIDF plans to send every soldier who was involved in combat on vacation.



Bielski to tour northern absorption centers

July 16, 2006

By HILARY LEILA KRIEGER

Jewish Agency Chairman Zeev Bielski will be touring the absorption centers of Nahariya, Karmiel and Tzfat Sunday after a Katyusha landed in one such center in Tzfat last week, in an effort to reassure new immigrants and check that the facilities provide adequate shelter from attacks.

The Jewish Agency is also running a project called "Putting Kids in the Center" to allow children from the north and the south to spend the summer in safety in the heart of the country. The United Jewish Communities and Keren Hayesod rose \$1 million for the project on Thursday alone.

© 1995 - 2006 The Jerusalem Post. All rights reserved.





Evacuating children interview

August 6, 2006

Host Marco Werman speaks with Michael Jankelowitz, spokesman for the Jewish Agency for Israel, about the thousands of Israeli children sent away to summer camps to protect them from the fighting between Hezbollah and Israeli forces. The move has brought together Jewish, Arab and Druse children who may not be used to living side-by-side.

[Click here](#) to listen to the interview.

Copyright 2006. The World is a co-production of the BBC World Service, PRI and WGBH Boston.





Back to School in Northern Israel Just Got Better

September 7, 2006

A project works at 'Making the Grade'

by Jessica Endy

It's back-to-school time. For most students in the Philadelphia area, getting new school supplies is an end-of-summer ritual. But for the youth of northern Israel -- whose lives have been turned upside-down by the financial, infrastructure and emotional devastation caused by the recent war -- buying necessities has become difficult, if not impossible.

To address this issue, the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia has adopted a project called "Making the Grade." As part of the \$15 million that Federation aims to raise through its Israel Emergency Fund, Federation seeks to raise \$500,000 for this specific cause. This funding will guarantee that 10,000 at-risk Israeli children receive backpacks and the supplies they need for this academic year.

To ensure that the project goes smoothly, Federation is partnering with the Jewish Agency for Israel, which will administer the program, oversee the distribution of supplies and provide Federation with frequent status reports. "Making the Grade" will primarily support students who are new immigrants to Israel, who are living in absorption centers or are classified as "at-risk" by social-welfare authorities. Many of the students' families have been left without any income because of the war, and therefore must focus on rebuilding their lives. School supplies can be an impossible expense after such trauma.

While in Israel two weeks ago, Federation president Ira M. Schwartz met with children in a northern Israel Ethiopian absorption center who illustrated the need for the project.

"Normally, these students would have worked all summer to have funds for school supplies," he said. "Instead, they spent the bulk of their summer in a bomb shelter."

"Imagine," he continued, "being an ambitious young person, who all year long was looking forward to earning money during the summer, then having that opportunity taken away from you."

Compounding students' lack of financial resources is the fact that many businesses in northern Israel remain closed. Even finding a store to buy supplies is hard.

To address this issue, Office Depot in Israel is partnering with Federation and JAFI on "Making the Grade."



Back to School in Northern Israel Just Got Better

Many of the students will receive an Office Depot debit card that they can use to buy the supplies of their choice at the most accessible store location. For students who do not have the ability or resources to travel to an Office Depot, the company is sending trucks filled with supplies to be delivered to students in the most highly impacted areas of Israel.

A number of kids have already received their debit cards or school supplies -- thanks to funds already forwarded by Federation and the support from members of the Greater Philadelphia Jewish community.

For more information on Federation's "Making the Grade" project and the Israel Emergency Fund, call 215-832-0564 or log on to: www.jewishphilly.org. Checks payable to the "Jewish Federation" can be mailed to P.O. Box 57200, Philadelphia, PA 19111-7200. Write "Israel Emergency Fund" in the memo field.

Copyright © Jewish Publishing Group - All Rights Reserved.



Israel summer programs respond to violence

July 17, 2006

By GABRIELLE BIRKNER - Staff Reporter of the Sun

Israel summer programs, through which several thousand American high school and college students spend time in the country, are drawing up contingency plans in response to the violence.

One program, Birthright Israel, which has sent more than 100,000 Jewish young adults on free, 10-day trips to the Jewish state during the past six years, has revised travel itineraries but has not canceled any of its summer tours in light of the escalating violence.

About 1,000 Birthright participants from around the world are now in Israel, and another 100 people are slated to arrive today. A Birthright spokesman, Gidi Mark, said tour groups would remain south of Haifa, and planned trips to the Galilee Sea or the Golan Heights region in northern Israel have been called off. As expected, some of those enrolled have withdrawn in recent days, but the cancellation rate has varied widely, Mr. Mark said. "We don't know why, in one group 20 out of 40 come, and in another 32 out of 40 come," he said.

Four siblings from Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, Mazal, Zelman, Michael, and Levi Agazarova, arrived in Israel yesterday in an 18-person Birthright group.

"We were a little nervous," Mazal Agazarova, 26, said. "You never know what's going to happen anywhere. We're from New York, and any day could be another 9/11."

Speaking by telephone from Tel Aviv, Ms. Agazarova said her parents were hesitant to let all of their children travel to Israel, but did not forbid them to go. "It sounds more scary than when you're here," she said. "Do we sense danger? Yes. Do we sense it as much as we did from New York? No."

But about 30 college students on another Birthright trip, organized by Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, spent part of the Jewish Sabbath Saturday in a bomb shelter after four rockets fired from Lebanon hit the northern city of Tiberias, where the group was staying. Even so, 13 of the participants celebrated their bar and bat mitzvahs over the weekend, according to a Hillel spokesman, Jeffrey Rubin.

Mr. Rubin's own 16-year-old son is traveling with his Jewish youth group in Israel, and will return to Baltimore on Tuesday - five days ahead of schedule.

He said it was premature to predict whether American universities would suspend their study abroad programs in Israel, as dozens did during the second intifada. Several schools only recently reinstated such programs.



Israel summer programs respond to violence

As of yesterday afternoon, Israel-based high school and pre-college summer programs organized by the youth divisions of the Orthodox Union, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, and the Union for Reform Judaism, in addition to the Young Judea course run by the Zionist movement Hadassah, had not been canceled. The respective groups had corresponded with parents, saying their children's safety was the top priority, and in some cases informing them of canceled excursions to northern Israel.

Last week, the Jewish Agency for Israel transported about 150 mostly young Americans and other foreign nationals who had been doing internships or volunteering in northern Israel to a youth village south of Jerusalem. "All of the parents have been very worried," the agency's director of the Israel Program Center, Ilya Sandler, said. "We told them that they were all safe, and if there was any kind of serious danger, we'd put them on an airplane and bring them home."

As of yesterday, he knew of only a few people who had planned to return to America.

In nearby Lebanon, which attracts far fewer American summer students, officials at the American University in Beirut - the city that has borne the brunt of Israel's airstrikes - were urging students to stay on campus, a school spokeswoman, Ada Porter, said. "For the moment, they're staying in dorms," she said, noting that there were about 40 Americans now studying at the school. "We're staying in constant contact with parents and students, and trying to keep them as reassured as possible."

She said the school was in contact with the State Department about a possible evacuation to nearby Cyprus.



On The Home Front

August 11, 2006

“This is the hour of the home front”, writes Zeev Bielski in the Jewish News this week, “revealing the true beauty of Israeli society and the Jewish people.”

The Chairman of the Jewish Agency’s juxtaposition of wartime and beauty offers up a fascinating paradox. War, with all the dreadful images that have been splashed across our TV screens and newspapers over the past month... the dead bodies, the bloody casualties and the terrified children cowering as rockets and fighter jets scream overhead.

Where, one wonders, is the beauty in any of that? How can one seek to draw any light out of a situation that seems so bleak and that has wrought so much tragedy on both sides?

And yet, this week, amid the ever-mounting death toll, amid the endless wrangling of the international community struggling to find a diplomatic solution, and amid the fearful sense that our brothers, sisters and cousins in Israel could find themselves entrenched in a battle whose duration far exceeds our original expectations, we also read of a global community coming together as one.

No longer is the diaspora just holding rallies, no longer are they just giving to charity, now individuals among us are asking, what can we personally do to support our fellow Jews in their time of need... in the hour of the home front? Our home front.

Here in the UK, the family of former Edgware resident Michael Shocket raise funds so he can personally deliver hundreds of pizzas to young, battle-weary soldiers. Deborah and Jonathan French arrange food and medical supplies for Israelis stranded in shelters or forced to flee from their homes. Judith Cohn launches an appeal for soap, shampoo and socks, so IDF troops fighting in Lebanon can have the simplest necessities. And on our own doorstep, Suzy Trebisch seeks to set up a support group, so that her children and other youngsters who’ve sought refuge from terror in a strange land need not feel lost and alone.

The list goes on. Our phone lines at the Jewish News ring continuously as people call to ask how they can best help. They’ve given of their money, they will continue to give of their money, but now they also want to give of themselves.

For while the frontline may be in northern Israel and southern Lebanon, the home front stretches beyond Jerusalem, beyond Tel Aviv - it stretches to Edgware, to Ilford, to Radlett, to Kingston, to Stamford Hill.

This is the beauty of the Jewish people. The bond that ties us together. We wave banners proclaiming ‘Israel is in our hearts’, but, more than that, Israel is our heart. Orthodox or Reform, rich or poor, black or white, as Jews it unites us and inspires us. Her soldiers are our soldiers, her children are our children. And in



the hour of the home front, her pain is our pain... and whether it's giving money, pizzas, medicine or simply shampoo, we do all that we can to alleviate her suffering.

Am echad. One people.

© 2006 TotallyJewish.com. All rights reserved.



Israelis persevere at home and at work

July 23, 2006

By Allison Kaplan Sommer

It may not have been business as usual, but Israelis in the north of the country - whether in the workplace, at home, or at universities - have displayed enormous fortitude, ingenuity and resolve since the outbreak of war.

A well-known saying characterizing Israel's three major cities goes that 'Tel Aviv dances, Jerusalem prays, and Haifa goes to work.' Despite the events of the past week, the residents of northern Israel and the companies who employ them - particularly in the world of high tech - have lived up to the work ethic they are known for. They may have changed the location or the manner in which they work, but they haven't stopped working.

When Hizbullah rockets began to fall on Haifa, the staff of 2,400 at Intel's Haifa research and development facility - where the Centrino chip and other innovations were born - went underground. Their basement workplace had wireless connections to the Internet. In addition, non-essential personnel have been permitted to work from home.

"Those working from home have connections and laptops with wireless, so there is no problem with connectivity," Kobi Bachar, a spokesman for Intel Israel, told Reuters. "Work is still going on, and we don't see any impact on output."

Intel employs a total of 5,000 workers in Israel, including its major chip manufacturing facility in the town of Kiryat Gat with annual exports of between \$1 billion and \$2 billion. It is now building a second \$4 billion chip plant, slated to open in 2008. But the brains of its operation is in Haifa, where other global giants like IBM, Microsoft and Phillips also have R&D facilities. Like Intel, these companies say that they are continuing to remain productive, while taking their employees' safety into consideration and allowing those who could - and wanted to - to work from home.

Companies bent over backwards to assure customers and partners abroad that they were still open for business. The high tech marketing and management company Trendlines, located in the northern settlement of Shorashim, sent an email to its partners abroad:

"We at Trendlines have some basic rules about how we conduct business. Rule #1: Don't share non-work-related problems with our clients and associates. Rule #2: Don't allow those problems to get in the way of providing the service that our clients have come to expect. We are about to break the first rule."

The company then reassured them that "the Trendlines office is an island of (relative) tranquility. We are open for business. Despite the occasional interruption, we are working, making every effort to meet our deadlines. If



Israelis persevere at home and at work

you have hesitated to call us because you thought we closed our doors for the duration, please know that we're here and would be happy to discuss your marketing and business development needs."

As their country has come under attack by Hizbullah, residents of Israeli cities and towns that were unfamiliar with life in a war footing, have shown remarkable stamina - sometimes surprising even themselves.

"What amazes me is that I've totally gotten used to the situation," said Carmia Cohen, a 24-year-old English teacher who lives in Haifa. "It's gotten completely normal for me, I don't go to work, I don't go outside except for quick grocery trips, but I live my life - and when I hear a noise I go to the shelter."

She reported that most of her friends have stayed in Haifa. "All of us are online - when there is a siren and missiles fall, we all check via Instant Messenger whether everyone is OK. And through the Internet, we are also connected to the whole world, to friends overseas," she told ISRAEL21c.

She and a group of young people from Haifa, including her two brothers and several friends, have been sharing their experiences with to the world, though the group blog Kishkushim that they began in March.

The northern residents who preferred to leave the northern region as the conflict continued had no shortage of places to turn. Friends, relatives and strangers living in the center and the south of the country to northern residents who needed to get away from the conflict, and offered moral and material support to those who stayed there. The daily newspapers have been filled with telephone numbers of various municipalities where residents are offering to serve as hosts.

Special summer camps were opened by the Jewish Agency and various other organizations, and backed by corporate contributions.

The Jewish Agency's 'Moving our Children to Safety' campaign relocated children from hard-hit northern communities to summer camp programs at Youth Aliyah Villages in the central of the country. During the sleep-away camp, children will participate in an array of recreational activities including swimming, hiking, sports, arts and crafts and field trips.

Children who came individually to stay with family members in the center of the country were offered free or discounted fees at municipal summer camps, and free entrance to attractions - amusement parks and water parks.

To keep the children who stayed north with their families entertained, a continuing stream of actors, singers and other celebrities made the rounds and visited bomb shelters and bunkers. Children's television stations, which normally broadcast only during the day, kept cartoons on all night to help little one remain distracted when awakened by a late-night siren.

On other channels, programming resembled an ongoing telethon, as broadcasters allowed residents call in for advice and information, people from around the country offered and pledged help, punctuated by news updates. Corporations pitched in to offer their help, donating everything from free groceries to free Internet access to those in the shelters.

Academia also stepped in to do their part to help those in the north keep up with their studies. Researchers at the University of Haifa, have found ways to continue their work despite the closure of campus. The Institute of Evolution is

Israelis persevere at home and at work

hosting a scientist from Kiev, Dr. Surgai Simotnik, who arrived in Haifa to work on research jointly with the Institute and with the Israeli Academy of Science. Simotnik flatly refused to leave Haifa and insisted on continuing his research.

From an original group of 250 students from overseas that arrived at the University of Haifa last week, only 70 have left the country, with the majority choosing to continue their studies despite the situation in Israel.

"The students are solid in their resolve to stay and this warms our hearts" said the director of the Overseas Summer School, Professor Hanan Alexander. Alexander and 140 students are temporary guests of The Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

"My parents trust the administration and know that no harm will come to me" said Adam Turnhiem, 21, from Boston. Adam, a graduate of Brandeis, arrived at the University of Haifa in order to participate in the summer Ulpan (intensive Hebrew-language-study program).

"I feel very safe and thankful for the devoted care of the University of Haifa team that is accompanying the Ulpan and takes care of our every need, I am looking forward to returning to Haifa and continuing my studies as planned" said Turnheim.

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev President Prof. Rivka Carmi personally phoned the presidents of universities and colleges in the north to offer assistance while their campuses are closed because of the threat of Katyusha missile attacks on the northern border. In the middle of the end-of-semester exam period, she offered the use of the university's facilities -including the library, computation center and study rooms - to ensure the smooth completion of exams.

"During this difficult time - especially for the residents of the North - we are here to offer our support and help in any way that we can," said Carmi.

In cooperation with the municipality of Beersheva, the university opened its sports center to the residents of the North who are currently staying in the city. This is in addition to an existing program for families from the Negev community of Sderot, who are currently staying in Beersheva to escape the barrage of Kassam missiles that have been falling in their vicinity.

Some northern residents didn't have to go south to get a workout. The luckiest residents of the Haifa area were those in a neighborhood of Kiryat Haim, where one of the locations designated a municipal shelter had been turned into a gym during peacetime - the air conditioned basement outfitted with the latest exercise equipment and television sets. The owner of the space, Ya'acov Hilo, decided not to shut down the gym when it was used as a shelter, but let his regular clients keep working out and letting any neighborhood residents seeking shelter slim down as they stayed safe by running on the treadmill or lifting weights as the sirens wailed.

Around the workout machines, mattresses, pillows and chairs were available for those who decided to spend the time in a more relaxed fashion.

Those who live in the north have felt the tremendous support of the entire country. Erika Galili, who lives in Rosh Pina with her husband and two children debated as to where they should be during the tense times.

"It is unbelievable what everyone is doing and what has been organized for us

Israelis persevere at home and at work

and everyone's heart is huge. I feel completely supported," she told ISRAEL21c, admitting ambivalence about accepting the family hospitality that was offered to her children.

"I really wanted to keep them home with me - our house has a shelter built to the highest standards. But in the end, I decided that they shouldn't be bored and they should live as normal a life as possible, so I sent them to the center of the country to stay with their cousins and go to summer camp."

She returned north to the web design business she runs with her husband.

"People are still coming to our studio: we are still open for business. We are lucky in the sense that it is easier to keep a computer-related business going in this climate. We have lots of work and long-term projects. The only problem is being able to concentrate with all that is happening around us."

© 2001-2005 ISRAEL21c.org. All rights reserved.



Jewish Agency (JAFI) Support for the Galilee's Non-Jewish Population



Introduction

In September 2005, Israel's population stood at some 7 million people: 5.6 million Jews and 1.4 million non-Jews (Arabs, Druze, Circassians). The non-Jewish sector makes up 20 percent of the population of the country as a whole, but a far higher percentage in the Central Galilee area. This includes such Arab and Druze towns as Tarshiha, Nazrat, Kfar Kana, Tamra, Sakhnin and Shfaram, as well as a large rural population. In this part of Israel, over 65 percent of the population belong to the country's non-Jewish sector, nearly 400,000 people.

Background: Jewish Agency programs for non-Jewish minorities in Israel. For a number of years already, the Jewish Agency has been supporting and implementing programs that reach out to the country's non-Jewish minorities in the fields of education, co-existence, small business development and health.

Education: For example, Net@, a program for high-school pupils to encourage technological and social excellence, reaches out to the non-Jewish population in the mixed towns in which it operates – Acre, Nazrat, Ramle and the Misgav area of the Galilee. Similarly, Atidim, a joint project of the Israel Defense Forces, Keren Rashi, the Education Ministry and the Jewish Agency, which is working to close social gaps in Israel by identifying talented and motivated disadvantaged high school youth from the periphery and providing them with enrichment programs that will help them compete for the prestigious IDF's academic deferred service track and study at university, is open to those minority groups that serve in the army – Druze and Bedouins.

Co-existence: Through the Allocations Unit, grass-roots organizations that deal with co-existence and mutual understanding have been funded since 1999. Over the past six years, the Jewish Agency has allocated some \$1 million to projects that have reached out to over 100,000 people – about half Jews and half non-Jews. Most of the projects work with school-age children and consist of joint encounters and activities within an informal, supplementary educational framework. Small Business Development: the Jewish Agency helped establish the Small Business Development Center in Yarka that helps the Druze community of the Galilee.

Partnership 2000: Co-existence activities are also implemented within the framework of P2K, as per initiatives and decisions of the steering committees of each partnership region. Recent projects include helping improve the commercial success of Acre's old city market and its Arab vendors. Health: the partnership between the Jewish Agency and the Cleveland Jewish Federation that seeks to address the issue of women's health in Israel, Isha, reaches out to women in the non-Jewish sector also through courses on proper exercise, nutrition and health awareness.

Jewish Agency (JAFI) Support for the Galilee's Non-Jewish Population

War in the North: Support for the non-Jewish Population

The katyushas that rained on the Galilee during the 33 days of hostilities did not distinguish between Jews and non-Jews, and indeed, a number of the civilian casualties came from the country's minority population groups. The residents of the Galilee's non-Jewish towns and villages were, along with their Jewish neighbors, compelled to spend long days and hours in air raid shelters and safe rooms. Similarly, the Jewish Agency's response to the war and its support for the civilian population of the north reached out to all sectors of the Galilee's citizens, Jews and non-Jews alike.

Summer Camps: during the war we provided relief and respite from the rockets for over 34,000 youngsters, aged 8-18, from throughout the north in summer camps in the center and the south of the country. Of these participants, about 3,000 came from 40 towns and villages whose residents are members of Israel's minority population groups.

Equipment for air-raid shelters and safe rooms: as part of our wide-ranging efforts to install air conditioning units, fans, televisions and emergency lighting in air raid shelters and safe rooms in the north, for which \$1.5 million funds was donated by UJC and synagogues throughout North America, we provided this equipment to 80 shelters in 15 towns whose residents are members of Israel's minority population groups. The equipment helped improve the basic conditions in the shelters, in which people were forced to spend long hours, and particularly helped amuse and occupy the shelters' younger generation.

Equipment for community centers: we are focusing on community centers in six Arab and Druze towns in the Galilee – Majdal Krum, Hurfeish, Shibli, Daburiyya, Maghar and Gush Halav – which were recently built with funding from the Housing Ministry but which were standing empty because there was no budget to equip them with furniture or fittings that would enable them to function as community centers. The Jewish Agency has undertaken to equip these centers fully, including office furniture and chairs for the central hall where events will take place; computers and audio visual systems to be used in activities. The budget for this is \$300,000. The work has already begun and should be completed by mid-September.

Days of Fun: Much of the non-Jewish population was reluctant to send their younger generation to residential camps in the center and south of the country, but to ensure that the children and youth nonetheless have a rest from the tension of the war and the rockets, we developed day-long excursions that combined visiting places of interest in Israel with rest and relaxation. Though the ceasefire seems to have ended the war, we are continuing with this project, and hope that by the end of August and the beginning of the new school year, as many as 10,000 youngsters from Israel's minority population in the north of the country will have enjoyed these day outings. Some 6,000 youth have already participated in this program.

Family Centers: Until the school year begins we are operating family activity centers in a number of the towns in the north, where children and parents together can do a variety of activities, recover from the trauma of the war and prepare for the school year that will begin in early September. Centers in Acre and Haifa are reaching out to the cities' Jewish and non-Jewish populations. The centers are open throughout the day.

Preparation for Studies: In a program developed and organized by the Education Ministry, we are reaching out to the primary and junior high school population in 42 non-Jewish towns and villages in the north. Activities that will take place

Jewish Agency (JAFI) Support for the Galilee's Non-Jewish Population

throughout the week beginning August 27 in schools and informal educational frameworks will reach out to tens of thousands of youngsters and help them prepare for the new school year.

Young Leadership Development: In a program in which the Jewish Agency is working together with the Abraham Fund, we will be reaching out to the young leadership, of primary and junior high school age, in the mixed Jewish and non-Jewish towns of Acre, Ma'alot Tarshiha and Haifa with three weeks of special enrichment activities that will begin in the last week of the school holidays and continue during the first two weeks of school. The program will reach out to some 30,000 young people, and includes a focus on community work, such as helping rebuild and repair damaged public buildings, as well as informal educational activities.

Financial Investment: Through all these activities the Jewish Agency is currently investing over \$6 million in helping the non-Jewish population in the north.