



REBUILDING LIVES Torn Apart by Terror

AIR RAID SIRENS SOUNDING ACROSS SOUTHERN ISRAEL

Where would you run?

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ISRAELI MOTHERS living on the Gaza border are crying out. For over a year, violent riots, sniper fire, explosive devices, arson kites and Hamas rockets have kept Israelis running for the safety of bomb shelters. Maayan Hendler, a mother from Sderot, poured out her heart in a video released by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "It's unnatural to explain to a child that it's healthy...and good to be scared. [We are] running into a safe space with sirens blaring, in a...frenzy and then trying to convince your child there's no need to be scared." Karen Halperin, another Gaza border mother, added tearfully, "We're trying to raise a generation that won't hate. But how can you love someone who is hurting you?"

Families on the Gaza border have only 15 seconds to find shelter from Hamas rockets. They live in constant tension, wondering when the next attack will come. A shocking 40% of the children suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a condition generally found in soldiers who have faced combat. It takes specialized techniques to treat these children and teach them to handle the stress and adrenaline coursing through their tiny bodies during attacks.

Over the past months, Israel has experienced unrelenting hatred from Palestinians: the violent murder of a young woman in a Jerusalem forest, barrages of rockets, car rammings, stabbings and shootings. Terror and the ensuing fear, grief and tragedy are part of the harsh reality of daily life. As Palestinian terrorists aim to turn Israel's roads, street corners and bus stops into battlefields, Israelis in certain areas think twice about trips to the supermarket or dropping kids off at school. Parents tuck their children into bed at night, wondering whether they will awaken to the scream of incoming rockets.

Hamas recently resumed launching long-range rockets into central Israel. The first attempts reached Tel Aviv, a city of over 400,000 inhabitants. The Iron Dome missile defense system prevented casualties, but less than two weeks later, Hamas attacked again. This time the rocket struck a direct hit to the Wolf family home, injuring the seven family members huddled inside and killing two beloved pets. The projectile tore through the roof and detonated on the floor, showering shrapnel everywhere and setting the home ablaze. As survivors, neighbors and rescue workers stood amongst the smoldering ruins, everyone was in agreement: the family's survival was nothing short of miraculous.

A few moments reduced the Wolf family's entire existence to rubble. Still, it could have been much worse. Images of the destroyed home show the devastating effect of shrapnel tearing through a baby crib. The Wolf's five-month-old daughter suffered from shrapnel embedded in her head but is expected to make a full recovery. "The most important thing is that we're okay," said the father, Daniel, from his hospital bed. "There were a lot of miracles."

Not all terror attacks end in miracles. Shortly after 10:00 on an ordinary Monday morning, a Palestinian terrorist armed with a knife snuck up on Sgt. Gal Keidan, 19, who was standing guard at a bus station. The terrorist stabbed him repeatedly, snatched his weapon and shot him point-blank before training the weapon on passing traffic. Rabbi Ahia Ettinger, 47, was driving home when he was caught in the terror attack. Without a thought to his safety, the brave rabbi confronted his attacker, drew his own weapon and fired at the terrorist, causing him to flee rather than continue killing. Rabbi Ahia paid a heavy price for his heroism.

One of the terrorist's bullets tore through his windshield and lodged in his head. He clung to life for nearly 24 hours, but finally succumbed to his wounds. His newly widowed wife now shoulders the responsibility of raising 12 children by herself.

Rabbi Ahiad's children took turns eulogizing their father at his funeral. "How could it be that someone who brought so much life into the world is no longer here to live with us," his eldest daughter lamented. "Every day when you returned from work, you made sure to take aside one of us for a conversation or a *Torah* (Gen.-Deut.) lesson," remembered another. "You were on your way home and you went back to save lives," shared a third. "We will miss you a lot."

PICKING UP THE PIECES

Throughout Scripture we see God's tender compassion for the grief-stricken, mourning and hurting. He identifies as the God who "heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds," (Ps. 147:3). He commits to "comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion," (Isa. 61:2b-3a) and He promises to console those who grieve (Matt. 5:4). He also calls us to partner with Him in this crucial task. "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" comes the clarion call in Isaiah 40:1-2. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem," He urges.

We have taken His emphatic call to heart. When terror rips the fabric of everyday life in Israel apart, Bridges for Peace helps pick up the pieces and offers the physical support and comfort needed to rebuild shattered lives. Through our Victims of Terror program, we come alongside the wounded with financial assistance to smooth the slow, painful and expensive path of healing and rehabilitation. We reach out to bereaved widows and orphans with gifts of compassion so they will know they are

not alone. We help sponsor an annual retreat for children who have lost a loved one in a terror attack, creating a safe environment for hurting young boys and girls to process the lingering trauma and pain amongst peers. We help build bomb shelters for communities in the line of fire to have safe havens within a 15-second radius when the rockets rain down.

We are able to do this and more only through the generous support of Christians who answer the urgings of a God with a heart for the brokenhearted. He has beckoned us to serve as His hands and feet, bringing comfort to His people in their time of grief and mourning. Will you answer His call? Will you give generously to the Victims of Terror fund so we can help Israel rebuild what terror has torn apart?

Blessings from Israel,
Rebecca J. Brimmer, International President and CEO



PM Netanyahu visits Rabbi Ahiad's family

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Victims of Terror

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