

## JEWISH NATIONAL FUND BRINGS ISRAELIS TO THE U.S. TO SHARE THEIR STORIES OF LIFE ON THE GAZA BORDER AMID A 'RAIN OF FIRE'



**NEW YORK, NY: August 2, 2018—**[Jewish National Fund \(JNF-USA\)](#) is bringing Israelis to the U.S. to put their voices to the headlines and share their personal stories of living along the Gaza border where hundreds of incendiary kites, balloons, and rockets have steadily rained down on them for months, destroying thousands of acres of crops and forest and the ecosystems and wildlife they contain.

Since March 2018, terrorists from Gaza have traumatized the people living in neighboring communities along the Gaza-Israel border, placing thousands of people's lives in danger and causing many to seek safety in shelters. The fires and damage sustained has had a tremendous impact on the mental health and livelihood on those who call the region home. Thousands of acres of farmland have been scorched—decimating the region's agricultural economy—and the number of individuals experiencing and being treated for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has seen an increase.

“Our brothers and sisters living on the Gaza border are strong and resilient,” said Jewish National Fund-USA CEO Russell F. Robinson. “Right now they need our support and for us to help them tell the real story of the atrocities they are facing. I am proud to bring these brave people to U.S. communities to share the truth behind the headlines and what life is really like when the terror is in your backyard.”

The speaking tour, *Gaza Border Crisis: The Trauma, The Damage, The Needs*, will kick off in Los Angeles, CA (8/19), and will include stops in Phoenix, AZ (8/20); Las Vegas, NV (8/21); Denver, CO (8/22); Chicago, IL (8/23); South Florida (8/24-26); Washington, DC (8/27); Boston, MA (8/28); Southern New Jersey (8/29); Philadelphia, PA (8/29); and New York, NY (8/30). An updated schedule with additional information is available via [www.jnf.org/gazatownhall](http://www.jnf.org/gazatownhall).

The Israelis will travel across the U.S. to share what is going on in their backyard and what daily life is like, the needs they have, and the issues they face on the ground. In each city, a local psychologist will discuss the effects of PTSD. The Israeli speakers include:

- **Michal Uziyahu**, is director of community centers, Eshkol Region, which shares some 30 miles of border with Gaza. She has witnessed firsthand the effects of trauma stemming from rocket fire and terrorism on young children. Born in the Sinai in a community returned to Egypt following the peace treaty signed when she was a child, she later served in the IDF and earned her MBA at Ben Gurion University. Michal is married to Amir and a mom of three.
- **Sarit Khanoukaev**, is a 21-year old young professional who lives and works in Sderot, less than a mile from the Gaza border. Having grown up in Sderot and familiar with PTSD experienced by children, Sarit today works with MAKOM, an organization that helps grow communities. She is responsible for counseling at risk-youth and young children impacted by PTSD and utilizes the JNF Sderot Indoor Recreation Center. Sarit is currently working on her BA in public policy and administration.

- **Yedidya Harush**, represents the Halutza communities and the entire Gaza Envelope region. Married to Shiran and a dad of two children, Yedidya was born and raised in the community of Atzmona in Gush Katif. His family relocated to Halutza after Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005. Yedidya served in one of Israel's elite military units, the 890th Paratroopers Brigade.

In the face of these recent attacks, Jewish National Fund-USA's Gaza Envelope Task Force, a group of dedicated donors who work to raise funds and improve the lives of Israelis living on the challenging border with Gaza, has quickly mobilized to provide emergency support to the victims of terror.

"Unfortunately, as the danger increased over the last 3.5 months, the Gaza Envelope residents watched their region become largely reduced to an ecological disaster area," said Betsy Fischer, Chair of the Gaza Envelope Task Force. "They are running to bomb shelters and safe rooms as rocket alerts blare and it's evident that the work of our Task Force is more important than ever. We are glad that Jewish National Fund-USA is taking on the bold move to bring residents from the region who will cross the country and share their stories about what life on the border with Gaza is like during this most difficult time."

Jewish National Fund-USA has also launched an [emergency campaign](#) to advance relief efforts and support the communities affected by this terrorism. In addition to funding trauma resilience centers, the JNF Sderot Indoor Recreation Center, and animal assisted therapy in the region, the organization is also planning to add new bomb shelters that can house 100 people each, paint bomb shelters already in place to make them more child-friendly, provide new fire trucks and firefighting wagons, purchase life-saving equipment, and fund special activities for children of the region.

**JEWISH NATIONAL FUND (JNF)** began in 1901 as a dream and vision to reestablish a homeland in Israel for Jewish people everywhere. Jews the world over collected coins in iconic JNF Blue Boxes, purchasing land and planting trees until ultimately, their dream of a Jewish homeland was a reality. Today, JNF continues to give all generations a unique voice in building and ensuring the prosperity of the land of Israel through their generosity and partnership with the people of Israel.

JNF embodies both heart and action; our work is varied in scope but singular in benefit. We strive to bring an enhanced quality of life to all of Israel's residents, and translate these advancements to the world beyond. JNF is greening the desert with millions of trees, building thousands of parks, creating new communities and cities for generations of Israelis to call home, bolstering Israel's water supply, helping develop innovative arid-agriculture techniques, and educating both young and old about the founding and importance of Israel and Zionism.

JNF expanded its education operations to include **Alexander Muss High School in Israel (AMHSI-JNF)**. Since 1972, AMHSI-JNF has provided a unique, accredited, semester study abroad program for high school students where the land of Israel becomes a living classroom, demonstrating 4,000+ years of Jewish and Israeli history. Our semester, mini-semester, and summer programs help teens from the US and around the globe develop skills and tools that boost their college applications and prepare them for college and beyond.

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