

Battered Israeli Communities



August 2018

Dear friends,

Israel's southern border to Gaza continues to be a troubled region. Its residents have had to cope with many threats over the past decade. Whether tunnels dug by Hamas underneath Jewish communities, rocket or mortar attacks coming from above, or as of recent, daily waves of fiery kites and explosive balloons. These seemingly harmless toys carry torches or incendiary devices that cause great destruction to the arid region of Israel's south.

The ICEJ is on the ground in Israel to show our friendship during difficult times. Recently, we delivered a mobile fire extinguisher unit suited for tough terrain that is inaccessible to regular fire engines, and we are sending more help. On our recent visit to the area, our team was astonished to see the resilience of the local inhabitants. Personally, I was concerned that many people would begin to leave the area, but I was surprised to hear that most communities along Gaza are growing! Kfar Aza, for example, is building housing units for 40 more families to join the community. This represents an increase of 30%, a remarkable growth rate for a small border Kibbutz in the midst of troublesome times.

Our presence and support means a lot. Whether through fire equipment or bomb shelters supplied by the ICEJ, the region has become safer. I will never forget the trip I took to Europe several years ago when I picked up the phone from an unknown caller. The man sounded very excited, "Is this Jürgen Bühler from the Christian Embassy?" I replied, "Yes." Then the man shouted, "You just saved my life! I am sitting in a shelter in Kfar Aza and a rocket landed just a few metres from us. Thank you so much!" In the shelter was a sign that said: "Donated by the ICEJ on behalf of Christians from around the world." The caller was Shai Hermesh, then a member of the Israeli Knesset who has lived in Kfar Aza since he helped found this border community in 1965. We have become good friends since then, and the ICEJ has continued to provide many more bomb shelters to protect the lives of the Jewish people.

Today, I ask you to help us continue to increase our help in this troubled region. The word of God says: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (Proverbs 17:17) Join us in being a loving friend to the people in Israel!



May God bless you richly out of Zion,

Dr Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ President
August 2018, Jerusalem

Through your giving, the ICEJ is bringing hope and comfort to the people of Israel in practical, life-changing ways.
Thank you for being a faithful friend to the Jewish people and to the ICEJ!



VANDALISM AS WARFARE

SPECIAL CRISIS REPORT

BY DAN HERRON

For years, Israelis in Gaza's border region, known as the Gaza Envelope, have reacted to the high-pitched whistle of incoming mortar rounds or the sirens from red alerts, warning Israeli residents to take cover from rockets. This threat remains (see last page), but a new one has materialised – a threat that demands the use of other senses. The smell of fire and the sight of smoke is what raises this alarm. The response likewise requires speed, but not to take cover; rather residents need to charge out to fight and contain the fire.

The grit of local Israelis is impressive but they need our help in the form of all-terrain firefighting trailers to limit the damages from the hundreds of fires ignited by incendiary kites and explosive balloons floating in from the Gaza Strip. The Israelis in the Gaza Envelope are literally fighting for their livelihood as they try to contain upward of 20 brush fires each day. Will you join the bucket line to stop this senseless destruction?

The ICEJ Steps in to Help

The ICEJ visited Kibbutz Kissufim in July, a short distance from the Gaza border, smoke from a fire was billowing upward in the background. The cry for all-terrain firefighting equipment had first sounded from local security officials struggling to protect their areas, such as Elan Isaacson, Head of Security for the Eshkol Region.

The ICEJ promptly donated a firefighter trailer (total cost per unit 15,500 USD) when the call came out for specialised firefighting equipment. Elan Isaacson explained that this is the most urgent need, **“I want to thank our friends at the Christian Embassy for your swift response in providing us with firefighting trailers. These trailers are the greatest current need we have to respond to the incendiary balloons coming across the border. Your support, not just now in times of crisis, but throughout the year is very important to us and strengthens us. I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all of our Christian friends.”**

The new firefighting trailer donated by the ICEJ has already seen action. You can also be on the frontline with Israelis. They will know that Christians like you from around the world helped put the right equipment into their hands at the time of their great need.

Help Israel Respond

Elan Isaacson's Eshkol Region has the longest border with Gaza, and his main effort has been to reduce response times to ignited fires. When our team was in the area three fires broke out in our immediate vicinity, and Isaacson shared:

“The crucial time frame for controlling a field or brush fire is the first 15 minutes. If a fire is not extinguished within 15 minutes, it will spread out exponentially and can cause significant damage to crops, animals, homes and could result in injury or death. The only vehicle that can get to a fire within 15 minutes guaranteed is a mobile firefighter trailer.”

FIRES IN NUMBERS

SOME 750

Fires caused by incendiary kites and balloons launched from the Gaza Strip

MORE THAN 7,500

Acres of agricultural land and natural habitats destroyed by fires

DAMAGES

The running total of damages caused by arson kites and balloons is now 2,200,000 USD

THOUSANDS

Of animal carcasses found, including foxes, jackals, turtles and snakes

MORE THAN 10

Fires start every day within 7 kilometers from the Gaza Strip

FIREFIGHTER TRAILER

Cost per unit for all-terrain firefighter trailer: 15,500 USD



7,500
ACRES
AFFECTED

**FIRE
SITES**




The ICEJ
donates
FIREFIGHTING
TRAILER

The Israelis love their land and they want to defend it. In an almost physical sense, we can help fight the fires if we put the right equipment into the hands of local Israelis.

One farmer showed us new saplings he has planted to replace a loss of 180 avocado trees. He has managed to replant relatively quickly, but an avocado tree takes an initial 5-6 years before it begins to yield fruit, a significant setback. The approximately 7,500 acres lost to fires ignited by the kites and balloons is very real and quantifiable in monetary terms, but their destructive effect goes deeper as local Israelis see the destruction

imposed on the leafy beauty and ecological health of an otherwise prosperous agricultural community. Let's do something to protect this beautiful and precious land.

Your help enables the ICEJ to provide timely aid as soon as crises arise in Israel. Because we are quick and nimble, your help actually acts as a first-responder on the scene of disaster. This was the case when Israel faced a brush-fire crisis in November 2016. The ICEJ provided immediate relief and helped families recover from the ordeal, which involved 1,773 fires nation-wide, necessitating the evacuation of 75,000 residents in Haifa alone. The household items a family needs to cook, the blanket a child needs to stay warm, or the immediate cash infusion a parent needs to restart family life is a result of your direct help to Israel and only possible because you care. Let's be the first to help Israelis when they face a crisis. 



Sheltering Israel's Gaza Frontier Communities

Do you know how important you are to Israel's frontline communities? Christians like you play a crucial role in keeping Israelis safe from Gaza's rockets and mortar shells. When a mother and her children hear the high-pitched whistle of an incoming mortar round, they have somewhere to run because of you. When the siren blares in warning of a rocket's imminent impact, they can quickly find secure shelter because of you.

Since the terrorist organisation Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, the ICEJ has continuously worked to put in shelters to secure threatened communities in Israel's vulnerable south-west region. With the determined support from Christians like you, we have constructed a total of **61 shelters**.

You are important for the staying power of Jewish communities in Israel's south.

- 1. Your help boosts the confidence and resilience of local Israelis.**
- 2. Your help frustrates the enemy's attempt to terrorise civilians.**
- 3. Your help saves lives and brings Israel a step closer to victory!**

The strength of the home front directly influences whether Israel is viable as a country or not. When you help the ICEJ put in new shelters, you are tending to the viability of Jewish communities and providing the staying power they need.

And they notice! And they say thank you! Remarkably, when we spoke with Elan Isaacson, he thanked us for more than our current crisis help; he thanked us for standing with Israel all year round! You are a great testimony to men and women on the frontlines. Please continue to strengthen Israel's communities, because your help matters! 🌍



SEND YOUR GIFT

Thanks to Christian support like yours, Israelis remain confident and determined to face down the menacing threats from their neighbours in the Gaza Strip. They even look forward to a future peace. Help them stay strong until that day comes. You can send your vital support to the ICEJ in any of the following ways:

BY CREDIT CARD

Visit int.icej.org/aid/israel_in_crisis and click on the **DONATE** button!

BY CHECK OR BANK TRANSFER

Please see instructions at int.icej.org/donate



Thank you for your generous support.

