

OCTOBER 25TH 2023

Members of the KKL-JNF Board of Directors toured the regional councils near the Gaza border on Monday, with the aim of learning their needs and continuing to support the residents who endured the terrible terrorist attacks.

"WITH THE HELP FROM FRIENDS LIKE YOU, WE WILL WIN"

On Monday, the 24th of October, a KKL-JNF delegation, led by Chairwoman Ifat Ovadia-Luski and the professional management team, visited the cities of Ashkelon, Sderot, and Ofakim. Following the tour, a meeting was held at KKL-JNF's offices in Gilat with the heads of the regional councils the Gaza Envelope.



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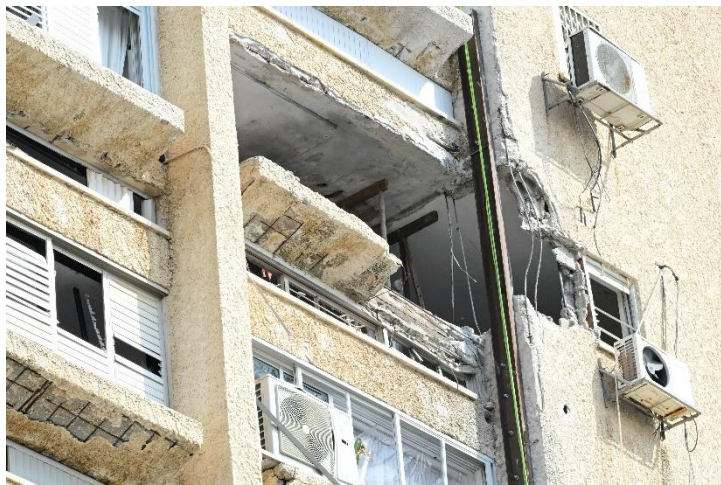
"We came here with the aim of strengthening you," Ovadia-Luski told the heads of the authorities. "From the day the war broke out, the entire board was mobilized. KKL-JNF has always played a central role in building the country and will also be part of the reconstruction of the surrounding area. KKL-JNF has so far provided initial emergency aid. We have put aside all other issues, and we are mobilized to deal with emergency matters".

Following the attacks, KKL-JNF mobilized for immediate assistance in evacuating residents, equipping emergency teams, educational activities for the evacuated families, and the donation of ambulances. The intention is to establish a professional team as soon as possible that will formulate a strategic plan for the rehabilitation of the area.

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"It is not easy to see the effect of the situation on the residents," said Ashkelon's Mayor Tomer Glam. "God has given you the merit to be on the side of the influencers for the benefit of the people of Israel and the residents of the south in particular. When the residents receive the news that plans have been approved and budgets are received, they will be strengthened in the belief that we do not have another land and we do not have another city".

Alon Davidi, the mayor of Sderot, described the situation in his city to the guests: "46 people were murdered in Sderot and there were more than 200 direct rocket hits to the houses. For three days we were besieged, while the soldiers cleared the city house by house. We carried out the organized civilian evacuation, the largest ever in the country - 28,000



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residents were transferred to 90 hotels. I know that the message of the importance of investing in Sderot is clear to the KKL-JNF Board of Directors".

Ovadia-Luski assured Davidi: "There is a real partnership between KKL-JNF and Sderot, and this region is our top priority. We have been with you until today, and we will continue to stand by your side".

Ofakim's Mayor Itzik Danino described how 14 terrorists infiltrated the city on a mission of murder and destruction. "Our heroic residents heard the shooting and organized themselves spontaneously. They left the house with guns, knives, and bare hands, when in front of them were terrorists armed with automatic weapons, RPGs, grenades, explosive charges".

The residents, together with sparse police forces, managed to eliminate nine terrorists. Five more barricaded themselves in the apartment with hostages, and they were later eliminated by the fighters of an anti-terrorist unit.

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"Our big challenge is to restore the feeling of security and help the residents deal with the trauma," Danino said. "I am very familiar with the work of KKL-JNF, and I know how much it works for the State of Israel, so this is an opportunity to say thank you".

Robert Tiviaev, a resident of Ofakim and a member of the KKL-JNF Board of Directors, personally experienced the moments of horror: "17 of my neighbors were murdered, and I was not far from being murdered as well. Until now we have not internalized what happened. At night I evacuated the bodies



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of residents together with ZAKA. There is a funeral after funeral here, a production line in the Ofakim cemetery. After four days I arrived at a hotel at the Dead Sea. I asked my wife to leave for a moment and only then did I start to cry".

Ovadia-Luski told the people of Ofakim: "We are all with you, the board, and the professional ranks of KKL-JNF. We were partners in the blossoming of the Negev from the beginning, and this is our role today as well".

A concluding meeting was held at the KKL-JNF Gilat offices.

"Following the terrible blow we suffered, KKL-JNF is one of the most serious bodies with which we have cooperation," said Gadi Yarkoni, head of the Eshkol Regional Council.

"It is not enough to restore what was, we need to think ahead and develop the communities," added Yahel Ben-Aris, director of external relations at the Sha'ar HaNegev Council. The head of the Sha'ar HaNegev Council, the late Ofir Liebstein, fell defending his kibbutz from the terrorists.

"Until there is a real answer and secure peace, it will be difficult to return to the communities," emphasized Itamar Rabivo, head of the Hof Ashkelon Regional Council.



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"KKL-JNF is the first body to respond. You have provided us with air to breathe, and for that, we thank you very much," noted Tamir Idan, head of the Sdot Negev Regional Council. "The towns in the region should be the most beautiful in the country, with the best education and the highest quality culture, so that people will want to live here".

"We are in a difficult event that no one imagined," concluded Shay Hajaj, head of the Merhavim Regional Council. "KKL-JNF was the first to respond, and that gave us air to start moving the wheel. The region has gone through difficult events, but with the help of friends like you, we will win."



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