

Photos: Yossi Zelig, Guy Lumer, KKL-JNF Photo Archive



The Road to Rebuilt Kfar Aza Runs Through Ruhama

Introducing KKL-JNF's flagship post-Oct 7 project:

Preparing ground in Kibbutz Ruhama for a new residential neighborhood for Kfar Aza evacuees.

Project #21156



They survived, but lost everything

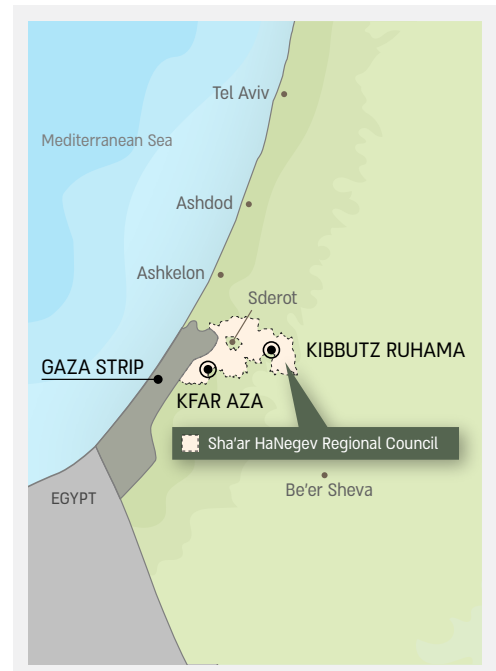
Kfar Aza was a pastoral kibbutz just 2 kilometers from the Gaza Strip. The October 7 attack changed everything. Sixty-two people were murdered, and 18 taken hostage. Today, the kibbutz stands silent, broken, and frozen in time. The crimes perpetrated here remain imprinted on the houses – a burnt dwelling here, rubble there, bullet holes everywhere. It will take at least 3 years to rebuild the kibbutz, but where will the surviving residents live in the meantime?

A place to call home

In Kibbutz Ruhama, KKL-JNF is quite literally preparing the ground for the solution: a new residential neighborhood that will contain prefab dwellings to house the evacuees. Since their rescue and evacuation on October 8, most of the residents of Kfar Aza have been living in a hotel – one room per family - on Kibbutz Shefayim in central Israel. Others, such as 31-year-old **Gon Sussana**, his wife and young children, have been dispersed around Israel.

Kibbutz Ruhama, located 16km to the northwest of Kfar Aza, will be a safe distance from the war zone yet still in the Shaar HaNegev Regional Council, their home region, which, according to Gon Sussana, is “fantastic”.

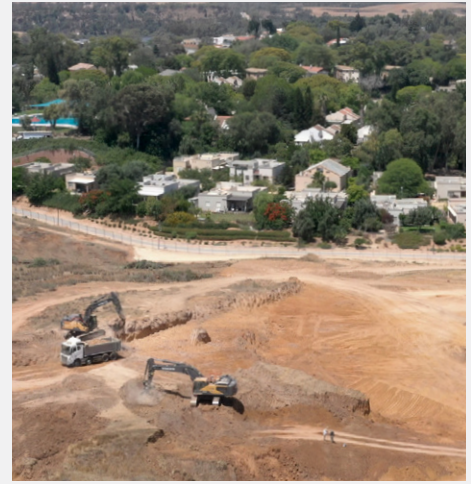
“Coming back to an area you know, where you are familiar with the school system, the supermarkets where you shop, your friends, is a big part of the recovery, and the courage of a person to take the first steps in returning to Kfar Aza,” he explained. “It’s critical, it’s lifesaving, and we’re very much waiting for it.”



Earthworks for the new neighborhood, which involved moving 300 thousand cubic meters of earth.
Photo: Guy Lumer, KKL-JNF Photo Archive

A new Zionist chapter

The Shaar HaNegev Regional Council is situated in the Western Negev, a region associated more than most with the bravery and Zionism of young Jewish pioneers, who in the years leading up to Israel's creation established farms, research stations and residential communities. Back then it was KKL-JNF who purchased the land, prepared it, and installed crucial infrastructure such as water lines for these young communities, whom they have continued to accompany throughout the decades as they grew and became established. Now, too, KKL-JNF is preparing the ground for what will be regarded as the new wave of Zionism post October 7: The courage to rebuild and flourish anew in a place that had previously seen so much loss and destruction.



The new neighborhood will be just across the road from the main kibbutz.

Photo: Guy Lumer, KKL-JNF Photo Archive

The work

The earth works and laying of infrastructure in Ruhama have been continuing apace under the devoted leadership of KKL-JNF construction engineer **Michelle Pariyanti**, who says that his team is working overtime to complete 10 months of work in half that time. "The staff begin work at 5 in the morning and finish at 11 or 12 at night," he noted.

And indeed, within the space of 49 days, Pariyanti's team already managed to transform a sizable hill into a series of terraces and level plots and lay down infrastructure for water and electricity. The work involves excavating some 300 thousand cubic meters of earth to create an entirely new neighborhood on the eastern side of Ruhama and expanding an existing guest bungalow area to its west. Upon the work's completion 124 prefab dwellings will be installed in the eastern neighborhood, and 64 in the upgraded western part; together they will house 600 people (188 households) from Kfar Aza. Come moving day Ruhama's current population of 500 will more than double overnight.



The plan includes the new neighborhood to the east, and the building of residential units within the kibbutz's existing guest area (left).

Embrace, while giving space

According to KKL-JNF's **Amit Ferdman**, who presented the plan, the idea is for the two communities to converge in some ways, while maintaining what makes them unique in other ways. For example, medical and security services will be run conjointly, while the addition of indoor and outdoor communal spaces will allow each community to run their own cultural and informal educational activities as they see fit.

In this way, the Kfar Aza evacuees will be embraced but not overwhelmed. After all, for the next three years at least, this will be the place that they call home.

According to Sussana, the ability to rebuild the Otef, and the communities, and to return home is the "true victory picture, the highest level of Zionism there is."

"The ability to build a temporary community at the highest standard, within an incredibly short time period, is not something we take for granted. You are doing amazing work, and I thank you hugely, with all my heart; history will remember this well," he concluded.



Week 1.

Photo: Guy Lumer, KKL-JNF Photo Archive



Week 4.

Photo: Guy Lumer, KKL-JNF Photo Archive

Together, let us write a new Zionist chapter

Join us in rehousing an entire community as they embark on the intermediate stage of their journey home to the rebuilt Kfar Aza!

Total cost: **51,205,174 NIS**

For the entire project; every contribution is significant!

