

From: Noam Schlanger <noam-sc@drorisrael.org.il>

Sent: Wednesday, June 18, 2025 4:00 AM

Subject: A Personal Note

Dear friends,

I don't often write on a day like this - but these are not ordinary times.

Five days ago, Israel entered into a full-scale war with Iran. Here in Akko, where I live, sirens and explosions have sadly been part of life on and off for the past two years. But this week, that tense reality returned with full force. Nights are sleepless, interrupted by multiple waves of rocket fire. And yet people adapt. Sometimes too easily.

Akko is a mixed city, home to both Jews and Arabs, many living without shelters in their buildings. Public shelters are often spare and overcrowded. My friends and I have been canvassing our neighborhood, identifying urgent needs and working with the municipality to address them.

Our urban educators' kibbutz here, like other Dror Israel communities throughout the country, has become a center of stability. I'm cooking meals for the kids, coordinating shelter logistics, and doing whatever it takes to keep our community grounded and connected. While many of our members are serving in reserve duty, those of us at home are supporting families, running emergency activities, and helping people stay calm and safe. Tomorrow, we're opening a sheltered space where our neighbors in Akko can bring their young children and toddlers in the mornings — a small but meaningful step to help families breathe a little easier during these tense days.

I have many, many criticisms of the Israeli government and the ways in which it runs this country - well before October 7th, and even more so since. It sometimes feels like it's easy to fall into either blind support of this regime or total criticism of every Israeli action. I have no access to secret intelligence. All I know is what I read online. I don't know the politicians running Israel -- and from what I do know, I don't trust them one bit.

But even if I have little faith in our political leadership, I do have deep trust in the people around me. My friends and family -- Jews and Arabs, whether they are serving as educators, pilots, medics, search and rescue personnel, therapists, or public servants - are doing their jobs with courage, dedication, and humanity. They represent the best of this place.

On a very personal level, this war touches both ends of my life. My partner of the past eight years is a Persian Jew, with family still living in Tehran. There's something especially painful about fearing for your loved ones in Jerusalem while also fearing for your loved ones in Tehran. That tension - caring for people on both sides of a missile barrage - it's not a new thing for us Jews. But it's still a powerful reminder about the humanity lost on all sides of wars.

I've also been following the rise in antisemitic incidents and rhetoric around the world in the recent months. It's painful to see how moments of violence here can reverberate so far away - fueling hate, fear, and division. Please know I'm thinking of you, too, as you navigate these tensions in your own communities.

In these uncertain days, I'm holding on to the people and values that keep me grounded. I'm proud to be part of Dror Israel, and proud to be working toward something better—especially now. Like many incredible organizations across the country, we are doing what we can: running daycares for the children of essential workers while schools are closed, supporting families evacuated from homes damaged and destroyed in missile strikes, and providing uplifting programming for kids in shelters. Sadly, we already know the drill when it comes to emergency education. But we also know how to do it with care, with community, and with heart.

Thank you for being in touch. Your care, your support, and your belief in our work means more than I can say. I'm really hoping for calmer days ahead and looking forward to finally being able to come see you later this year, hopefully in November.

Hoping for quieter days,

Sincerely,

Noam