



JEWISH FEDERATIONS AND THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE

March 31, 2022

After more than a month of fighting, the war continues in Ukraine. Nearly four million Ukrainians, including tens of thousands of Jews, have fled the country. Jewish Federations and our partners continue to work together to ensure that urgent relief reaches the most needy.

(For background on the crisis, as well as for information on the Jewish community in Ukraine, see [here](#)).

THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- There are now close to 4 million refugees who have fled Ukraine, as well as 6.5 million internally displaced people. This means that a full quarter of Ukrainians are no longer living in their homes.
- Ukraine's next round of negotiations with Russia is set to resume tomorrow, April 1. There are also increasing calls for a direct meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Russian President Vladimir Putin.
- According to a British intelligence source, Putin has “massively misjudged the situation in Ukraine” and some Russian soldiers have refused to carry out orders. “Soldiers are short of weapons and morale, and are sabotaging their own equipment.”
- At the same time, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said that Putin is being misled. The Russian leader has “not been fully informed by his Ministry of Defense at every turn” of the situation in Ukraine.
- Despite saying it would “drastically reduce military activity” around the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, there have been ongoing Russian bombardments of the city in the past few days. Meanwhile, the mayor of Chernihiv said that his city came under what he described as a “colossal attack.”
- Ukraine says that half of the city of Irpin, near Kyiv, has now been destroyed. Similarly, satellite images of the besieged city of Mariupol show entire blocks that have been reduced to rubble.

ISRAEL

The Israeli field hospital in Mostyska, Ukraine, “Kohav Meir” (named after Ukrainian-born former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, and meaning “Shining Star”) has now been operating for just over a week. The hospital, financed in part by Federation-supported JDC, is Israel’s flagship humanitarian effort and is staffed by 60 Israeli medical personnel. Since the start of operations at the field hospital, 1,117 people have been treated, of whom 33 have been hospitalized. A total of 935 adults and 182 children have been treated.

The 1,000th patient to be treated was a 75-year-old woman called Nina, who about two weeks ago helped transfer refugees from the shelled city of Kharkov to the Polish border. During the operation, Nina, who is now recovering, felt pains in her chest and lost consciousness before being hospitalized.

Since its inception, the field hospital has also used advanced and groundbreaking technologies from Israel's Sheba Beyond Virtual Hospital, managed by Dr. Galia Barkai, who said, "The ability to access Sheba's best experts remotely using advanced technologies is nothing less than exciting. Despite operating from tents in the field, we are able to provide the most comprehensive and best medical solution to a variety of medical problems, including in the field of psychiatry."

Since the fighting began, 18,357 Ukrainians, Russians and Belarusians have filled out forms online to express interest in Aliyah. In addition, close to 60,000 phone calls have been received by the Jewish Agency's Aliyah call center. For details about the difficulties Israeli authorities are having in keeping up with the level of interest in Aliyah, see [here](#). Since the fighting began, a total of more than 7,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Israel on Aliyah, and a further 10,000 non-Jews who are not eligible under the Law of Return have arrived seeking refuge on humanitarian grounds. Almost 200 Israeli diplomats are working on Ukrainian issues, many of whom are stationed along Ukraine's borders.

REFUGEES, FEDERATIONS AND PARTNERS ON THE GROUND

In just one month since the fighting began, **Jewish Federations** have raised more than \$42 million for Ukrainian relief efforts (see details [here as to funds are impacting in the field](#)). JFNA's Special Allocations Committee has already met twice to designate funds for Ukrainian relief, and a third round of allocations is scheduled for later today. The relief efforts are being undertaken by our Federation partners, The Jewish Agency for Israel, The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and World ORT; as well as by United Hatzalah, Hillel International, Nefesh B'Nefesh, HIAS, the Israel Trauma Coalition, Hadassah Medical Organization, Chabad, and Shma Yisrael.

See [here](#) for an op-ed in the Times of Israel by Jewish Federations' Mark Wilf and Eric Fingerhut on Federations' strategic approach to crisis planning in Ukraine .

A second group of 30 leaders of Federations from across North America participated in a mission to the Polish-Ukrainian border just over a week ago. The Atlanta Journal Constitution published [this](#) piece by the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta's CEO Eric Robbins about his experiences on the trip. Members of the group from The Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford made [this](#) video report of their journey; Mark Nuemann from The Associated: The Jewish Federation of Baltimore prepared [this](#) video report; and 10WBNS covered the [story](#) of JewishColumbus' CEO Joel Marcovich.

JFNA is now offering half-hour webinars twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, to update audiences about the rapidly evolving situation in Ukraine. To register, [click here](#).

JFNA is also preparing, in collaboration with the Jewish Agency and the JDC, to send Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking volunteers to the war-torn region to provide humanitarian support and assist Jewish refugees who wish to make Aliyah. The first cohort will likely depart in early April. To apply for the program, [click here](#). For a list of FAQ's, [click here](#). For more information, please email [Sarah Eisenman](#).

The Jewish Agency for Israel has, so far, brought **7,000** Ukrainian Jews to Israel as olim or as eligible to make Aliyah. In the coming week, at least another **1,000** are expected to arrive. The Agency expects this number to surpass **10,000** in the next two weeks and approach **15,000** shortly afterwards. This number represents five times the number of olim who came from Ukraine in all of 2021.

The Agency continues to operate **18** facilities at **5** different border crossings, accommodating thousands of refugees, many of whom will make Aliyah. Some have come on the almost **300** buses the Agency has coordinated with local organizations while others have come on trains by themselves. Most arrive with little more than the clothes on their backs, having left Ukraine in a panic and a rush.

The Agency has also now launched a new initiative called “Aliyah Express,” in cooperation with the Government of Israel. The program enables the Agency to expedite the Aliyah process so that Ukrainian Jewish refugees can shorten their stays in temporary housing in neighboring countries and get to Israel quicker. This then frees up those facilities to take in additional refugees.

In a joint operation between the Jewish Agency, Israel’s Beilinson Hospital and **United Hatzalah**, a number of seriously sick Ukrainian refugees who had fled the fighting in their country were transported to Israel on a specially chartered medical evacuation flight. Prior to their evacuation, the patients were housed at a Jewish Agency facility in Bucharest, where they were cared for by Agency employees and medical staff from Beilinson who were on location.

Last week, a delegation of Knesset Members, as well as Jewish Agency Acting Chair Yaakov Hagoel visited the Agency’s center in Budapest, Hungary, before flying back to Israel on a rescue flight carrying new immigrants.

The **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee** (JDC) continues to operate in Ukraine and bordering countries. Among its activities in Ukraine, JDC was able to transfer humanitarian provisions from the Dnipro Hased Welfare Center to Kharkiv, where fighting is heavier and supplies were needed.

In Kharkiv, JDC is able to provide services only to the neediest welfare recipients due to the heavy fighting. In the Odessa region, where the situation is more stable, JDC is managing to provide most services, and all essential services are available.

In Mykolaiv, the city faces regular Russian bombing and JDC has been able to purchase essential provisions in Odessa, and send these by bus to Mykolaiv. Where possible, the buses return carrying evacuees from Mykolaiv (who then continue on to Moldova).

In Kherson, there are food shortages: vegetables, fish and meat are no longer available in stores where there are long lines. The city has a grave shortage of medication and this is impacting hundreds of elderly JDC welfare recipients still in the city.

To date, JDC has assisted 5,500 refugees in Moldova. This number includes those who then moved on to Israel, Romania, Germany, and elsewhere. Volunteers based in Moldova have also made over 7,200 outgoing check-in calls to elderly welfare recipients in Ukraine.

JDC has assisted in the evacuation of a total of **10,000** people from Ukraine since the beginning of the war. The organization continues to post staff and volunteers at border crossings, refugee gathering points, transit hotels and elsewhere. With the mass movement of the population, the numbers and locations of refugees being accommodated by JDC are in constant flux. On average, JDC has some **2,000** beds occupied each night, in total, in Moldova, Romania, Hungary and Poland. Those staying in JDC-supported facilities are provided with three meals each day.

Last week, JDC sent **ten** social workers to Moldova, Romania and Poland. The social workers map the refugees' needs and the available social support networks. Their initial findings show that the refugees are very confused and lonely, and in need of intense levels of care.

The Jewish Agency and JDC have both established [emergency hotlines](#) to assist the Jewish community in Ukraine. For more about JDC's efforts, see [here](#); for those of the Jewish Agency [here](#).

A Russian government spokesman claimed earlier this week that synagogues in Ukraine are being used by Ukraine to warehouse munitions and are "temporary bases for Nazis and different paramilitary squads." The **United Jewish Community of Ukraine** denied the claim, stating that all synagogues and Jewish facilities in Ukraine are used exclusively for religious activities or to provide humanitarian assistance to the Jewish and general population. In response to a photo published by Russia of Ukrainian soldiers using the Uman Synagogue for military purposes, The Rabbi Nachman Foundation in Uman said that the gates of the synagogue have been closed since Rosh Hashanah and no one is inside.

Chabad had a very large presence in Ukraine before the war. Since hostilities broke out, many Chabad rabbis have led convoys of their congregants out of the country to safety. At present, some 30 Chabad rabbis remain in the country, continuing to provide spiritual and other help to local Jewish communities.

Tens of Israeli and **Jewish organizations** are working to provide humanitarian relief for Ukraine. JFNA has put together a summary of these efforts, which can be found [here](#).

Jewish Federations have activated our emergency protocols and are working closely with the Government of Israel and our partners to do everything in our power to support efforts that ensure the safety and well-being of the entire Jewish community in Ukraine, as well as to provide as much general humanitarian aid as we can.

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