



**The Jewish Federations<sup>®</sup>**  
OF NORTH AMERICA  
Israel Office

## **JEWISH FEDERATIONS AND THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE**

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**As Russian forces continue to advance on major Ukrainian cities, thousands of Jews are fleeing the country. While Russian forces have made considerable gains, the Ukrainian capital Kyiv has not yet fallen, and fighting continues. The Israeli Government and The Jewish Agency for Israel are establishing transit camps in countries bordering Ukraine, and Israel's Ministry of Immigrant Absorption says that up to 10,000 Ukrainian Jews are expected to make Aliyah in the coming weeks.**

(For background on the crisis, as well as updated information on the Jewish community in Ukraine, see [here](#). A summary of events and reactions, as well as Federation partners' activities during the first two days of the war, can be seen [here](#).)

### **RUSSIAN INVASION**

Despite reports of unexpectedly strong Ukrainian resistance, Russian troops have now entered parts of Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, as well as Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, as more than 200,000 Russia troops continue the invasion of Ukraine. On the fourth day of fighting, CNN reported that massive explosions have been heard, "as Ukrainian forces engage in fierce fighting with Russian troops in multiple cities across the country, as ordinary Ukrainians and reservists join efforts to defend their homes and families against Russian acts of violence."

Early on Sunday morning, a spokesperson for the British Ministry of Defense said, "Russian forces are not making the progress they had planned. They are suffering from logistical challenges and strong Ukrainian resistance."

Nonetheless, with Russian forces advancing on the capital from multiple directions, the city is effectively under siege. The Ukrainian government imposed a strict curfew on residents of the city since Saturday afternoon, with nobody permitted to leave their homes until at least Monday morning.

The invasion has killed at least 198 Ukrainians so far and the UN says that more than 120,000 people have fled the country in the past 48 hours. Among both military and civilian casualties, a six-year-old Ukrainian boy was killed during heavy gunfire and in Kyiv a nine-story residential building was hit by artillery fire.

### **REACTIONS**

Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett spoke to President Zelensky on Friday, and offered Israel's assistance with any humanitarian aid needed. He also updated President Zelensky on some steps that have already been taken

in this regard. Prime Minister Bennett reiterated his hope for a speedy end to the fighting, and said that he stands by the people of Ukraine in these difficult days.

Today (Sunday), Prime Minister Bennett spoke directly with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and offered to mediate between Ukraine and Russia. According to the Israeli Hebrew-language daily newspaper Yedioth Ahronot, Putin replied to Bennett's offer by calling Ukrainian President Zelensky a "Nazi," and implying that Israel should side with Russia. Zelensky himself is Jewish.

Across the world, including in the United States, Canada and Israel, protests have been held against Russia, and in support of Ukraine. Meanwhile numerous western countries have begun concrete measures to support Ukraine and restrain Russia.

Talks are currently underway to expel several Russian banks from the international SWIFT network that allows funds to be transferred between banks in different countries. Meanwhile a number of countries, including the U.S. and Germany, are sending significant military aid to Ukraine. Germany has also banned Russian aircraft from its air space.

On Saturday, the Ukrainian Embassy in Israel began actively recruiting people in Israel to fight against the Russian military. "The Embassy has begun the formation of lists of volunteers who wish to participate in combat actions against the Russian aggressor," the embassy wrote in a now-deleted Facebook post written in Ukrainian. In the post, the embassy asked those who wish to "participate in the protection of Ukraine from the Russian military aggression" to send an email with their personal information, including any "military specialty" they may have. Some 500,000 Israelis are estimated to have Ukrainian roots, most of them having come to Israel in the years immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

## **FEDERATIONS AND PARTNERS ON THE GROUND**

Federations are planning to allocate millions of dollars to partner agencies on the ground, in support of relief efforts for the Ukrainian Jewish community. Immediate and short term needs already total about \$20 million. See [here](#) for details.

### **The Jewish Agency for Israel**

Israel's government estimates that around 10,000 Ukrainians will immigrate to Israel in the coming weeks. As a result, the Jewish Agency for Israel is immediately increasing its presence in the field to take in and care for Olim until they are able to fly to Israel.

The Agency has announced that it will open six Aliyah processing stations at Ukrainian border crossings with four countries: Poland, Moldova, Romania and Hungary. These stations, operated in conjunction with Nativ and Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aim to immediately assist the expected waves of immigration due to the war. The Jewish Agency says that it is also prepared to increase the number of stations at very short notice.

Since the start of the war, the Agency has been operating from a central Aliyah station in Lviv, which also served as the departure point of the first group of Olim (immigrants) who crossed the border into Poland over the weekend, with the help of Agency shlichim (emissaries).

Adhering to directives from Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Agency has also now moved its shlichim from Ukraine to the Polish side of the border. From there, the shlichim will cross the border into Ukraine every day, together with Israel's diplomatic teams, in order to continue assisting Ukrainian Jews who want to immigrate to Israel.

In a complex Agency operation, and after a nerve-wracking 16-hour process, the first group of Olim from Ukraine crossed into Poland over the weekend. The immigrants are being temporarily housed in a hotel near Warsaw where they will remain until they are flown to Israel in the coming days. Upon arrival in Israel, the Olim will receive temporary housing, with help from the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration. A video of the immigrants on the bus out of Ukraine can be seen [here](#).

### **The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)**

JDC has launched a centralized hotline for its network of Hesed social service centers. The hotline is operated by Russian speaking volunteers in Israel who handle incoming and outgoing calls. A text message was sent to all JDC clients in Ukraine informing them of the hotline, whose Ukrainian phone number is +380947111104.

A separate group of JDC volunteers based in Moldova is attempting to call all homebound or bedridden elderly in Ukraine in order to check-in on them, determine if their designated JDC Home Care worker is currently able to reach them and attend to their needs, and to see if there is anything further that they require. In cities where the situation is harsher, JDC has prioritized the most difficult cases, and some designated Home Care workers have slept at clients' homes.

JDC has also prepared accommodation in Western Ukraine, Moldova and additional Eastern European countries for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Ukraine. Similarly, JDC has arranged for IDPs to stay overnight at various Heseds, as they try to reach the borders.

Finally, JDC is also providing extra food and medicine for clients to allow them to store additional items at home in the event that the situation in Ukraine becomes even worse.

### **Birthright**

Birthright Israel is working to support participants from Ukraine and Russia who are currently in Israel, offering them the option to stay in Israel with family, or through the Onward program. Where possible, they are also being offered to reunite with their families. There are currently 36 Birthright participants in Israel from Ukraine. In addition, there are two groups from Ukraine scheduled to arrive next month, totaling 42 participants, and plans for these groups are currently being evaluated.

**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.**

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