



The Jewish Federations[®]
OF NORTH AMERICA
Israel Office

JEWISH FEDERATIONS AND THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE

March 8, 2022

The fighting in Ukraine has grown harsher, and with it, the humanitarian crisis. The first of what could be 15,000 Olim (new immigrants) from Ukraine have begun arriving in Israel

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

THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- Fierce fighting continues and Russia's attacks intensified on Monday, though the main advance towards the capital Kyiv by Russian forces remains "stalled," according to US officials.
- Yesterday a Russian strike hit an evacuation crossing point outside Kyiv, killing eight people including two children trying to flee the invasion. The United Nations says that at least 406 civilians have been killed in Ukraine, with a further 800 injured.
- The Ukrainian and Russian governments have agreed on an evacuation corridor for fleeing civilians from the city of Sumy, which has seen ongoing Russian attacks and airstrikes in recent days. Several previous attempts to evacuate civilians during temporary ceasefires have failed, and European leaders have accused Russian forces of continuing to target the pre-approved routes.
- In an interview on ABC World Tonight, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned that the war will not stop at Ukraine: "Everyone thinks that we are far away from America or Canada. No, we are in this zone of freedom. And when the limits of rights and freedoms are being violated and stepped on, then you have to protect us. Because we will come first. You will come second. Because the more this beast will eat, he wants more, more, and more."
- In an indication that the war is not going as expected for Russia, it seems that the country has already committed "nearly 100%" of the combat power that had been staged on the border of Ukraine and in Belarus, according to a senior US defense official on Monday.
- US defense officials have also said that an additional 500 US troops would be sent to Europe to reinforce NATO's presence in Poland, Romania, Germany and Greece. The additional forces are meant to support US troops already in Europe. At the same time, the Biden administration has repeatedly said it would keep US troops out of the actual conflict.
- According to the United Nations, at least 1.7 million refugees have fled Ukraine since the beginning of the invasion, a number that they predict could climb to 5 million. Many are also internally displaced, with the western Ukrainian city of Lviv reporting that it is struggling to cope with the more than 200,000 people who have arrived in the city from locations further east.
- The World Bank has approved a \$723 million emergency financing package for Ukraine.

ISRAELI RESPONSE

Israel's Foreign Minister Yair Lapid met US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Latvia yesterday. Lapid explained to Blinken that Israel's attempts to mediate do not diminish its condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has continued to hold phone conversations with Russian President Putin, Ukrainian President Zelensky and other players in an attempt to help mediate a solution. Blinken said that he plans to visit Israel in the coming weeks.

At the same time, in addition to the humanitarian aid and the field hospital that Israel has sent to Ukraine, the Jewish state is also considering sending helmets and ceramic vests, following requests by the Ukrainian government.

Meanwhile Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked said that Israel will place a cap on the number of Ukrainian refugees allowed in who are not eligible to immigrate to the Jewish state — but did not indicate what that figure would be. “We will approve some sort of humanitarian cap on people who are not eligible under the Law of Return. In the coming days I will formulate an organized policy, because we have to get this situation in order.” Since the February 24 outbreak of war, 2,792 Ukrainian nationals have arrived in Israel; 129 of them were denied entry for unspecified reasons.

Until a new policy is in place, any Ukrainian refugees who show up in Israel will automatically be allowed to enter after a brief inspection. (Currently, Ukrainian refugees without first-degree relatives in Israel must pay a \$3,000 deposit, which is returned when they leave).

FLEEING UKRAINE, FEDERATIONS AND PARTNERS ON THE GROUND

In less than two weeks, **Jewish Federations** have raised \$18.1 million towards an initial fundraising goal of \$20million and \$19.7 million overall for Ukrainian relief efforts. A total of \$7.95 million has already been allocated to The Jewish Agency for Israel, The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), World ORT, United Hatzalah, and Hillel International; and JFNA's Allocations Committee is meeting again on Thursday to decide on the next round of funding.

On Sunday, Rebecca Caspi, the head of Jewish Federations' Israel office, welcomed the first flights of Ukrainian olim at Ben Gurion airport since the war broke out, alongside Prime Minister Bennett and other senior Israeli leaders. “It is incredibly moving to be here representing Jewish Federations, and to see the first plane loads of refugees from Ukraine arrive home to Israel. Ensuring the safety and security of Jews around the world is core to our mission,” Caspi said. See [here](#) for more.

The following day, Caspi represented Federations at a meeting of the Ministerial Cabinet on Aliyah at Israel's Office of the Prime Minister, where, at the Prime Minister's behest, decisions were made to significantly increase the preparation and resources directed at smoothing the Aliya process for the thousands of Ukrainian refugees currently trying to reach the Jewish state. Additional details [here](#).

In Poland, the world's largest pre-Holocaust yeshiva has become a camp for Jewish refugees. The Chachmei Lublin Yeshiva operated in the Polish city of Lublin until 1939, and in recent days the **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)** has turned it into a facility that provides about 190 beds for Jewish refugees from Ukraine. See [here](#) for more.

Israel's Diaspora Affairs Minister Nachman Shai departed yesterday for Poland, where he was set to see first-hand the refugee crisis on the border with Ukraine. Shai's trip is the first public visit by an Israeli minister to the Ukrainian border since war broke out last month. Around 900 olim have arrived in Israel since fighting began, and thousands more are reported to be in transit, or trying to get out of Ukraine. The Israel government expects that up to 15,000 olim could arrive in the coming weeks.

Jewish Federations have [successfully advocated](#) for Ukrainians in the U.S. to remain and are now working to have Congress approve supplemental funding for the Ukraine crisis in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

The Jewish Agency and JDC have established [emergency hotlines](#) to assist the Jewish community in Ukraine.

For more about JDC's efforts, see [here](#) and those of the Jewish Agency [here](#).

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](#).

UJA-Federation of NY will hold a Ukraine Briefing today, March 8 at 4PM ET. To join, register [here](#).

JFNA will hold a briefing on March 9th at 12pm ET that will deliver an update on the latest developments in the war in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Jewish community. Click [here](#) to register

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.

For more information, please contact: JFNA's Dani Wassner dani.wassner@jewishfederations.org