



The Fund for Victims of Terror Support Group Rehabilitation Programs for Families of Hostages

Presented to JewishColumbus

January 2025

Introduction

It's hard to believe that a full year has passed since the dreadful morning of October 7, 2023. The magnitude of the attacks and the aftermath has been unprecedented. To date, more than 1,800 civilians and soldiers have been killed, more than 10,000 have been injured, and 94 men and women remain captive (include three who were in captivity prior to October 7, 2023). In response to the attack, the Swords of Iron War began, calling some 360,000 IDF reservists away from their jobs and families to serve their country. Since then, Israel has endured relentless bombardment, with over 26,000 rockets, missiles, and drones targeting the country from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Iran. This onslaught has caused widespread devastation, displacing approximately 200,000 Israelis, including more than 75,000 who remain unable to return home.

The Fund for Victims of Terror's Support for Families of Hostages

One of the most significant ways The Jewish Agency for Israel has responded to the harsh aftermath of October 7 is through the Fund for Victims of Terror, which has vast knowledge and experience in providing immediate and long-term responses to victims of terror. Now in its 20th year, the Fund provides swift and meaningful support to Israeli families affected by terror or rocket attacks. This support includes immediate emergency grants, long-term rehabilitation grants for psychological care, job retraining, and other recovery needs, as well as annual camps for children and youth. By partnering with government agencies, we ensure efficient, non-duplicative assistance, helping victims rebuild their lives and regain a sense of normalcy.

Upon becoming aware of the abduction of Israeli and foreign citizens, the Fund formally revised the scope of its work to include the families of individuals abducted by terrorists. This update ensures that the families of hostages and those who have been released from Hamas captivity are now eligible for assistance from the Fund.

The families of the hostages received an immediate emergency grant of NIS 4,000 and an additional grant in the amount of NIS 5,000 from a donation raised by our partners in North America. The grant was received by parents and spouses of hostages and, in the event of a child left without parents, the child's guardian received the grant. Families of the foreign nationals who were taken captive also received the grants.

When civilians were returned from Hamas captivity, the Fund provided them with immediate assistance.

Contrary to the Fund's usual regulations, which allocate assistance based on households, the Fund's public committee approved a special arrangement granting each returned hostage an individual grant. Within this framework, returned hostages who are foreign citizens from Thailand, Tanzania, Nepal, and other countries also received assistance.



*Romi Gonen upon her release from Hamas captivity.
Picture credit to the IDF Spokesperson's Unit*

While the immediate family is eligible to receive assistance, the extended family also endures significant hardship. Through the Fund, we strive to support the entire family, encompassing the second and third circles of hostages, including adult siblings, minor and adult cousins, grandparents, nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, partners, and other relatives. At present, these groups are not eligible for governmental assistance and struggle to find appropriate

responses to their needs. To bridge this gap, we have introduced group interventions and retreats, which have proven highly effective in delivering intensive therapeutic and relief support:

1. Group Rehabilitation Retreats

These three-day retreats provide therapeutic and emotional support for survivors' families in serene locations. Guided by psychologists, participants engage in therapy sessions, body-mind processes, and activities tailored to their needs. Each retreat accommodates specific groups—parents, siblings, or extended families—offering a safe space for connection, recovery, and strengthening resilience.



2. Family-Based Therapeutic Processes

Extended families participate in long-term therapeutic programs, including 10 guided sessions at resilience centers. These structured meetings foster healing through body-mind therapy, art therapy, and open dialogue. Tailored to each family's needs, the process supports role adjustments and emotional recovery, helping families manage the challenges of reintegration and long-term care.

These initiatives are made possible through matching funds provided by the National Insurance Institute and the Ministry of Welfare, enhancing the programs' reach and impact. Their partnership ensures sustained support for families in need during their recovery journey.

"You don't understand the magnitude of your contribution and what you've done for us. We arrived as a large group, physically and emotionally exhausted, filled with fears, and some of us overwhelmed with guilt (about what?). As my father described it: we were falling, in freefall, into an abyss... and then we met in the desert.

Disconnected from all the noise in this stunning landscape, we began to breathe together. We cried, laughed, ate, and united as one. The space you provided allowed us to let go and made us realize that we are one big family—a community we must care for, and it will take care of the rest. On the last night, we danced until we lost ourselves, and you simply performed a great mitzvah.

I have no words beyond immense gratitude. We, too, are a significant part of all this trauma and the message to the world. We, too, need these healing and rebuilding activities, which ultimately contribute more than any individual therapy. So, thank you.

May all the families of the hostages join our circle, and may we have the chance to rebuild our lives and truly smile again, together. I was just thinking about those who work behind the scenes for us and don't fully understand the significance of their support. Please pass on the message. We returned with renewed strength because, sometimes, such moments truly save a soul. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

-Sister of hostage

With Our Appreciation

Israelis from all sectors of society have endured unimaginable trauma since October 7, 2023, and the Fund for Victims of Terror is helping those whose lives have been torn apart by terror and war cope with their trauma, begin the long process of rehabilitation and recovery, and stay strong in the face of fear. Support from JewishColumbus will demonstrate that these families are not alone as they begin their long, hard road to recover and heal. Thank you for your consideration. Together we will prevail. *Am Yisrael Chai!*

Budget

Item	Description	Cost (USD) ⁽¹⁾
Retreats for Families	5 retreats for different groups (20-70 participants)	170,000
Family Therapy Programs	10 group sessions for extended families at resilience centers	93,000
Indirect Costs	Operational and logistical support for programs	13,200
Total	Comprehensive program cost for retreats and therapy programs	270,000

Notes:

(1) Projected amounts are subject to change due to currency rate fluctuations, increases in expenses, and other program updates.