

# Emergency Response in Israel

## Meeting Urgent Humanitarian Needs and Providing Psychosocial Support

December 15, 2023



Welcome the stranger.  
Protect the refugee.

### The Situation

More than two months after the unprecedented October 7 terrorist incursion into Israel, the impact continues to be felt across the country. As families grieve the more than 1,200 lives lost, rockets continue to target heavily populated civilian centers across the country – and an estimated 138 people are still being held hostage in Gaza. **An estimated 200,000–250,000 Israelis have been internally displaced**, including dozens of communities near the Gaza Strip and along the border with Lebanon, where increased tensions have led the government to issue evacuation orders.

For more than 70 years, HIAS has utilized its presence in Israel to aid newcomers and refugees through providing services and creating safe spaces of welcome. Within 24 hours of the brutal attacks of October 7, HIAS activated its Emergency Response team to provide life-saving support to those displaced in Israel and provided critical security information to asylum seekers and displaced families. HIAS will continue to focus on providing basic needs, cash assistance, mental health, and legal protections to the hundreds of thousands of people displaced.

### Humanitarian Needs

To understand critical needs and gaps in services, HIAS Emergency Response teams assessed displaced communities and consulted with local and national NGOs within 48 hours of the attacks. Assessments confirmed the need for coordinated and sustained basic needs including cash assistance, counseling and psychosocial support, and an array of protection programs for the displaced, especially children. Displaced persons who fall outside of government support, such as refugees and migrant workers, were further identified as having urgent needs. HIAS continues to assess needs, reaching out to refugees, migrants, Israeli citizens, and other communities in locations where needs are reportedly unmet. Like many

rapid onset emergencies, there is a swell of community-organized services and support for those displaced, however, more sustainable solutions are needed as teams prepare for the days and weeks ahead.



A woman weeps during special presentations and eulogies to honor the 1,200 Israelis killed and to mark the 30th day since the Oct. 7 Hamas assault on communities near Gaza, during a special candlelight vigil ceremony at the Western Wall in the Old City in Jerusalem, Nov. 6, 2023. (Marcus Yam/Los Angeles Times)

### HIAS Emergency Response

HIAS' response centers on four program types of emergency assistance: **1) Food and Household Items**, **2) Cash Assistance**, **3) Protection Services**, and **4) Mental Health and Psychosocial Support**. Focusing in areas of displacement, HIAS' emergency response programming aims to serve those most vulnerable (including citizens, refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants) across Israel. HIAS' model of partnership emphasizes the importance of working with local organizations on the ground. **HIAS' response thus far has reached over 82,000 individuals**, both directly and through these critical local service providers.



HIAS emergency partnerships coordinator Abdelmonim Haroon, himself an asylum seeker, holds hands with an Eritrean boy displaced during the October 7 attacks on October 26, 2023. (Sammy Voit for HIAS)

## Response Achievements

### Basic Needs



**2,924**

people supported  
with emergency  
food assistance



**309**

people received  
NFI kits

### Protection



**6,430**

people utilized  
info channels



**129**

children accessed  
safe spaces

### Mental Health and Psychosocial Support



**66,721**

people received  
MHPSS first aid



**1,231**

people received  
individual support  
sessions



**148**

people received group  
support sessions

HIAS began life-saving distributions to remote vulnerable communities that were forcibly displaced from the attacks in the South. This includes Eritrean families who had been seeking asylum in Israel before the crisis.



**Basic Needs / Non-Food Items:** HIAS distributed food and NFI items to 80 asylum-seeking families displaced from Ashqelon to Nitzana, including hygiene supplies, household items, infant items, clothing, computers, school, and play materials. HIAS will continue supporting this population in coordination with the Jewish Agency.



**Cash-Based Assistance:** Cash and voucher assistance is a critical need for families unable to go back to work and caregivers, especially those currently in shelters. HIAS continues to distribute cash assistance to vulnerable affected Ukrainian families and will expand its direct cash assistance programming.



**Supporting our Partners:** HIAS is expanding its impact in Israel through expanding impact in Israel through local partners for additional health, protection, housing/shelter and legal services, focusing on the displaced.



**Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS):** “HIAS is providing psychological first aid and stress management group support, individual and community-based support, multilingual MHPSS hotline and appropriate service referrals.



**Child Protection:** Psychosocial and recreational interventions for children, with linkages to referral pathways for longer-term care.



**Protection:** HIAS is providing information (in appropriate languages) and referrals to affected populations to help them to access services, including via specialized international and national agencies.



HIAS staff, along with community volunteers, organize items during an emergency food and non-food item distribution for a displaced Eritrean asylum-seeking community in Nitzana, Israel, on October 26, 2023. (Sammy Voit for HIAS)

## HIAS' Commitment to Global Emergencies

For decades, HIAS has responded to crises around the world to better assist displaced populations – including refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people – and vulnerable host communities. HIAS is committed to serving in crises, whether in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Venezuela, or Chad, or whether the crisis is a complex protracted conflict or a sudden natural disaster. No matter what the situation, HIAS stands for a world in which displaced persons find welcome, safety, and opportunity.

## Partnerships

The strength of HIAS' partnerships is foundational to its quality programming. Prior to the conflict, HIAS maintained over 20 national partnerships, which are being activated and reconfigured to support urgent needs. Many of these partnerships aided the same communities which are now among the most vulnerable. During this emergency, HIAS expanded its partnerships with local refugee-focused organizations like JACC and Negev Refugee Center and formed crucial new partnerships with national agencies such as ERAN,

a lifesaving volunteer organization providing mental health first-aid to all residents of Israel in emotional distress (by telephone and online, free of charge, anonymous, and confidential).

## About HIAS Israel

Since 1950, HIAS' work in Israel is led and staffed by a team of Israelis and asylum seekers who work closely with civil society to support refugees so they can build new lives and reunite with family members in safety and freedom. HIAS has worked within the Israeli legal system and partnered with Israeli lawyers, human rights activists, and legal aid organizations to provide services to asylum seekers, mainly from Eritrea, Sudan and Ukraine, and offer higher education support to Jewish immigrants to Israel. HIAS Israel also responded quickly to the influx of Ukrainian refugees in 2022, providing legal aid, employment support, and mental health support.

## About HIAS

HIAS is the international Jewish humanitarian organization that provides vital services to refugees and asylum seekers in more than 20 countries. We advocate for the rights of all forcibly displaced people to rebuild their lives and seek to create a world in which they find welcome, safety, and opportunity.

## Contact

For more information, please contact:

**James Orlando**, Senior Director,  
Emergency and Humanitarian Programs  
[james.orlando@hias.org](mailto:james.orlando@hias.org)

**HIAS Media**  
[media@hias.org](mailto:media@hias.org)



**Welcome the stranger.  
Protect the refugee.**

